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Contents

	Page No
❖ <i>From the Editor's Quill</i>	
❖ Struggle at the Assam-Bengal River Basins: Fictional Illustrations in Historical Perspective	❖ Rup Kumar Barman 1
❖ Significance of Oral History Selection of Interviewees Preparation of Questionnaires and Techniques	❖ Daljit Singh 12
❖ Perception of Mahatma Gandhi and his Ideas in Occident	❖ Om Prakash 30
❖ In the quest of a new space under the colonial rule	❖ Rahul S.Mazumdar 41
❖ Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's 'Re-interpretation' of Sikh History in Speeches	❖ Kashmir Singh Dhankhar 54
❖ Jainism in South Kosala: A Study	❖ Devendra Kumar Singh and Amit Kumar 66
❖ The Role of Judiciary vis-à-vis the Politics of the Government in Perpetuating the Caste System in India: An Analysis	❖ Pallavi Devi 71
❖ Mariani: The birth place of anti-British Movement in Assam	❖ Ananda Saikia 87
❖ Sorrow of Women during Partition of Punjab An Historical Analysis of Ice-Candy-Man	❖ Gurpreet Singh Harika and Daljit Singh 91

❖Forts And <i>Duars</i> of Ahom Kingdom in Medieval Assam: A perspective Study	✍Sona Ram Kalita	101
❖Mobilising the marginalised section during Quit India Movement: A case of eastern Uttar Pradesh	✍Uma Shanker Singh	109
❖Role of Marudhu Brothers in the South Indian Rebellion	✍P. Raja	120
❖Demographic Changes in Assam: Responsibility of the British Government	✍Shirumoni Baruah	125
❖Review Article: Muslims of Bengal An analysis of some Perspectives (1870s-1990s)	✍Heena Ansari	134
❖India's Act East Policy and North East India: A Focus on Connectivity and Cross Border Trade with Neighbouring Countries	✍Ranju Kumar Bharali	153
❖Impact of Buddhism in the Social Life of People of Ancient Bengal (c. 5th C.E. to 12 th Century C.E.)	✍Palas Kumar Saha	160
❖Revisiting the Issue of Women Participation in Quit India Movement : A Study of Present Jorhat District of Assam	✍Monjit Gogoi	170
❖Book Review	✍Partha Dutta	177

From the Editorial Quill

The history of North-East India in the perspective of Indian history

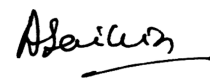
The issue is the history of North-East India in the Indian perspective is very pertinent. Let us begin with Ancient India. To any student of the ancient period of India, the name of Bhaskarvarman would be an important one in the post-Gupta period. Not only did he gain the alliance of Harsha, carry his arms into Bengal increasing the 'power and prestige of the kingdom of Kamrup to an extent never dreamt before, but also stood out a patron of letters. He figures prominently in Hiuen Tsang's account as well in the Harchacharita. But he does not so much as find a mention in Romila Thapar's History of India. Then what better can be expected of a historian who would describe Kamrupa(Assam) as a mountainous region ? Simialrly, Nilkanta Sastri's book Advance history of India (1970) is nearly eight hundred pages. But this so-called Advance history mentions regarding ancient Assam in less than fifteen lines in some scattered references. And in these lines, one significant observation is 'for many centuries, after Bhaskarvarman, nothing is known of Assam except that it was a part of Pala dominions. But, much earlier to the publication of this book the fact that the kings of this region though bearing the name Pala, were quite distinct from the Pala dynasty of Bengal had been firmly established in the famous book in Early history of Kamrup(1933) by K.L. Barua and in P.C. Chaudhuri's History of the Civilization of the people of Assam. This fact has been conveniently overlooked in the said so-called Advance history of India. In the medieval period, we have seen that Ahom King Rudra Singh was one of the famous kings of the then entire North-East India. He attempted at forging an army by inviting the Kachari and the Jaintia kings to join him in launching an attack on the powerful Moghuls which should have featured in every book on Indian history and unfortunately does not find a place anywhere. Similarly, Sri Manta Sankardev played a vital role in order to propagate the new Vaishnavite Movement and here Koch King Naranarayan and his brother Chilarai patronized the Movement. But these are less figured in true historical point of view in the Indian historical books. In the recent years, much attention is being paid to uprisings against the British in the writings of Indian history. Speaking of such uprisings, let us take the case of the recently published Subaltern Studies by Ranajit Guha. A rough analysis of the contents of the first three volumes would show that there are five specific articles on Bengal, four on U.P., two on Bihar, two on South India and Just one on the Kamrup-Goalpara region, the uprisings being those of the Mughal times giving an impression that little happened in this vast region during the British period. We, of course know better. The way the Nagas, the Mizos and Gomdhar

Konwar offered resistance to British expansionism are the romantic sagas of modern Indian history and yet which finds no place in histories of modern India in spite of their claims of being Advanced or Comprehensive. Similar case is seen in the context of Lachit Barphukan, writings on Bishnu Prasad Rabha, Jyoti Prasad Agarwalla and the like. These are the few examples that we have focused here. It can perhaps still be argued that little or no material is available on the region which has an all India bearing and hence this region has been overlooked in general histories of India. In this context, prominent historian Gordon Johnson is of the opinion that Indian historiography was dominated by the study of the North. Hence, it must also not be forgotten that the historian of the North-East is also the historian of India. Hence, S.K. Bhuyan, one of the doyen historians of this region was acutely aware of this. In his presidential Address in the local history section of Indian History Congress in 1959 at Guwahati, remarked, 'you will see that physically remote, Assam was not outside the cultural hegemony of Aryavarta and Dakshinaty. Its inhabitants had been influenced by the great religious upheavals that swept over India. A thorough knowledge of Assam is a matter of vital necessity to Indians in general and to the people of the Province in particular. But, so far in the present case; it seems, historical wisdom is yet to be emerged. In fact, if we go through the famous remark of Radhakrishnan that National integration cannot be built by brick and mortar, it cannot be built by chisel and hammer. It has to grow silently in the minds and hearts of man. In fact, these vital issues have not received from historical point of view that it should have received.

Anyway, it is our sixth and humble approach to publish this volume of Journal of history department of our College. This editorial does not claim any originality. Much of the thoughts expressed here have been picked up from numerous publications. Not a perfect volume in many ways, nevertheless we feel that the completion of this volume, in a way, is redemption of our pledge to the subject of history. In this context, special expression of our gratefulness goes to our founder Principal Sjt. Ananda Saikia, who is also a devoted scholar in the field of historical research, Sjt. Durlav Chandra Mahanta, founder President, Governing Body of our college and Dr. Girish Baruah, one of the prolific philosophers of north eastern India. Their inspiration and guidance, in fact, sustained us in our Journal. We would forever remain grateful to all the contributors of the research papers and learned Advisory Board. Finally, we offer our sincere thanks to Mr. Latu Gogoi, L.G. Computer & Printing centre, Lichubari, Jorhat for taking up the task of computerization with much care and patience.

*Expecting healthy criticism and encouragement from learned section,
With esteem regards,*

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Editor

Struggle at the Assam-Bengal River Basins: Fictional Illustrations in Historical Perspective

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Abstract

Growth of civilization at river basins is a general feature of settled human history. From the ancient society to present day, river systems have been the sources of fishing, agriculture, transport, trade and commerce, state politics and of course the mode of lives of people. So rivers are essential living organs of human society. Again, the dwellers of river basins have maintained several ancient living occupations (like fishing, boating and agriculture) with constant struggle despite facing ecological disruptions. Along with prominent river systems of the world, the rivers of Eastern and Northeastern India (especially Bengal and Assam) are considered to be very much resourceful for understanding the struggle of the people of river basin. Historians have aspired to conceptualize the struggle of people of the river basin in multiple perspectives. However, historians' task is often supplemented by the fictional illustrations left by novelists. Unsurprisingly, the river system(s) of Bengal and Assam have been frequently used by the Bengali and Assamese novelists for highlighting the tensions of the riverine people of their respective regions. Their struggles for existence, power-politics, socio-cultural traditions and of course the question of 'thought control' are unavoidably linked with the river system. In order to historicise the struggle of the people of the river basin of Eastern and North Eastern India, in this paper I have examined two novels with a historical perspective. These novels are (i) Tista Parer Brittanta of Debesh Ray (1988), and (ii) Kalahi Nadi: Ikul Hikul of Jitendra Das (1989).

Tistaparer Brittanta: The Struggle of a Region

Assam and Bengal are well-known in India as the land of chain of rivers, their tributaries and distributaries; floodplain lakes and streams. The prominent transnational rivers of the region like the *Ganga*, the *Brahmaputra*, the *Tista*, the *Torsha*, the *Mahananda*, the *Sankosh*, etc. are closely attached to the regional, national and the continental history. The internal water bodies and the coastal belt of Bengal have also their close relationship with their people in different capacities. The nature-community relationship, on the other hand, is an important source of inspiration for the Bengali and the Assamese novelists starting from Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894 CE) to Harisankar Jaladas. They have paid adequate attention to examine the location of rivers in the socioeconomic lives of Bengal. There are large variations in the Bengali and the Assamese novels which have dealt with the rivers and their people. Among such novels *Tistaparer Brittanta* deserves special attention. '*Tistaparer Brittanta*' is an 'Akademi Award' winner novel (1990) by Debesh Roy. First part of this novel was published in a periodical called *Baromas* in 1980 and 1981. Its second part was published in *Saradiya Kalantar* in 1984 and 1986. Last part of this novel got a printed form in 1987 in a special issue of *Pratikshan*. It got the shape of a complete novel in 1988.¹ Like its initial publication, this novel has dealt with different phases of struggle of people of the basin of the *Tista* river.

The *Tista* is a transnational river with a total length of 315 kilometer. It originates in the Eastern Himalayas and flows through Sikkim and Rangpo, Kalimpong, Jalpaiguri and Mekhliganj of West Bengal. It receives the *Dik Chhu*, the *Rangpo River*, the *Lang Lang Chu*, the *Lachung River*, the *Rani Khola*, the *Ranghap Chhu*, the *Rangeet*, the *Ringyang Chhu* as its tributaries in the hilly regions. It joins the *Jamuna* river at Fulchari in Bangladesh.

The *Tista* is closely associated with different communities and their socio-religious culture. It is a sacred river to the communities like the Rajbanshis, the Nepalese, Lepchas, etc.² Among these communities, the Rajbanshis are very much close to the *Tista*. They worship the *Tista* as their mother. It is a symbol of their prosperity, existence and their own culture. Any trouble to the *Tista* is thus a sign of misfortunate. They are so close with the *Tista* that any change in the *Tista* is considered as a symbol of struggle of the Rajbanshis of that locality.

Debesh Roy has started this novel with a brief description of the people of the *Tista* basin at Krantihat (Jalpaiguri district) of West Bengal. He presented the neighbourhood of Krantihat and its people including the Rajbanshis, Rajbanshi Muslims, tea garden labourers [especially the Madasias] and the migrants from

East Bengal like a trained social scientist. The novelist has illustrated that the pre-settled 'Rajbanshi landed class' had started facing a critical challenge in their lives with the journey of West Bengal as a border state of India with huge population pressure from different Indian provinces and newly born Pakistan (1947). The traditional settled lives of the Rajbanshis of the *Tista* region had perceived a serious threat due to the 'land reforms programme' in West Bengal especially under the United Front Government (1967- 69) and later under the Left Front Government (1977-2011).³ It is a hard reality that the 'agricultural land' has been a sensitive issue in West Bengal. The large scale migration of the East Bengali minorities [especially the Bengali Hindus to West Bengal after the partition (1947)] had increased the demand of agricultural land. The problems of resettlement of the East Bengali refugees and voluntary migrants and the continuity of 'feudal-type of old zamindari system' had prepared the background of land reforms in West Bengal. After the introduction of the *Estate Acquisition Act* (1953), a large number of Rajbanshi semi-zamindars [locally called *jotedars* in the Duars region of North Bengal] lost their agricultural lands in excess to the limit of seventy-five *bighas* (25 acres). *Khas* (vested) land had been distributed to the landless cultivators. Although the 'looser' *jotedars* were mostly Rajbanshis but their caste fellows were comparatively less benefitted. Hence, there was a strong voice in North Bengal for the distribution of the vested land to the Rajbanshis. In 1955, the Siliguri Zonal Kshatriya Samity (SZKS) resolved that, 'in the law made for acquisition and re-distribution of lands, the necessary provision is required to be made by the Govt. of West Bengal so that the lands acquired from Rajbanshi-Kshatriya *Jotdars* of Bengal are distributed among the native cultivators of the locality who mostly belong to the Rajbanshi-kshatriya community and who are actually landless since long past.'⁴

Similar demands were also raised by other Scheduled Caste organizations of North Bengal. Thus a sentiment against the non-Rajbanshis had started to grow among the Rajbanshis in the 1950s [due to the alienation of lands from the Rajbanshis to other communities]. So the Rajbanshis of Cooch Behar had demanded a 60% reservation in the government jobs in order to compensate the loss of lands.⁵ But the literacy rate of the Scheduled Castes of Cooch Behar in 1961 was not more than 5.5% while the district average was 29%. Naturally, it was not possible for the Rajbanshis to acquire government service as demanded by them. So the possession over the cultivable land was the primary means of development of the economic status of the Rajbanshis. Naturally, land alienation to the non-Rajbanshis [began with the first phase of land reforms in West Bengal] had germinated the seeds of a 'sense of deprivation' among the pre-settled communities of North Bengal. *Tiata Parer Brittanta* has illustrated all these historical features with great care.

Table 1
The Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families of North Bengal benefited by the
Operation *Burga* (unto 31.12.85).

District/State	Total Figure	Scheduled Caste	Scheduled Tribes	% of the SC/ST beneficiary
West Bengal	1,346,757	401,617	162,662	41.89
Darjeeling	12,831	4,139	3,028	55.85
Jalpaiguri	55,792	25,769	12,841	51.27
Cooch Behar	74,420	44,507	770	60.83
West Dinajpur	96,431	26,534	28,699	57.27
Maldah	75,453	19,056	18,993	49.10

Sources: *Department of SC and ST Welfare, Government of West Bengal.*

Table 2
Distribution of vested land (till 30.09.95).

Descriptions	West Bengal	North Bengal
Distributed vested land	428,179.95 Hector	170,081.80 hector (39.09%)
Beneficiaries	2,605,432	671,841 (SC 301,491, ST 144,184)
Bargadars	14,98,386	343,817
Land cultivated by the share croppers	448,286.16 Hector	142,405.26 Hector

Sources: Dinesh Dakua, *Kamtapuri Andolon Ekti Jana Bichhinna Andolan*, Calcutta, 2003, pp.30-31.

The second phase of land reforms was undertaken in West Bengal with the establishment of the United Front (UF) Government in 1967. During the period between 1967 and 1969, the UF Government had vested one million acre of land. It broke the backbone of social domination of the landed aristocrats (*jotedars* or *jamindars*) of West Bengal.⁶ The *jotedars* of North Bengal could not escape from it. However, third phase of land reforms called '*Operation Burga*' under the Left Front (LF) Government was successful in vesting family land and recording 1.2 million of sharecroppers within three years (1978-81).⁷ According to the official sources, 428,179.95 hector vested land was distributed among 2,605,432 beneficiaries. In North Bengal 1,70,081.80 hector vested land was distributed among 671,841 beneficiaries out of which 301,498 were Scheduled Castes (SC) and 144,184 were Scheduled Tribes (ST) [as shown in the table 1 and table 2].⁸

Land reforms and distribution of vested lands to the landless agricultural labourers by the UF and the LF governments had direct impact on the mind setup of the people of the *Tista* basin. The Uttarkhanda Dal (UKD, 1969) and the

Uttarbanga Tapasili Jati O Adibashi Samity (UTJAS) (1977) [two prominent socio-political organizations founded by the Rajbanshis] had criticized the land reform policy of the West Bengal government particularly the mode of re-distribution of acquired land to the landless cultivators. The UKD and other organizations of the Rajbanshis had claimed that the 'East Bengali refugees' got preference in regards to the distribution of vested land. A feeling against the 'East Bengalese' was thus generating in the *Tista* region. The sense of deprivation was transformed into a matter of political opportunity for the landed class of that region.

The above-mentioned episode of land reforms and its consequences have been illustrated by Debes Roy. The characters of Rajbanshi landed class [like Nouchar Alam and Gayanath Jotdar] and their fellow members have sensitized the issue of Rajbanshi / Kamtapuri language to protect their own feudal rights on their ancestor's land.

On the other hand, the struggle of the 'East Bengali migrants' as well as the landless agricultural workers and the poor people of the *Tista* basin have been illustrated by the novelist with every minute details [what historians of North Bengal studies have failed to illustrate]. The representatives of the most marginalized class have their prominent position in the *Tista Parer Brittanta*. The characters like Bagharu, Nitai and Madarir Ma [and many other minor characters] have been constructed in such a way that they are representing the people with extreme poverty. They are just like the slaves of dominant people. But they are the symbol of their own distinct identity. They are the true characters of universal phenomena.

Historical study on 'flood' in the prominent river system has been a major concern among the environmental historians since a couple of decades. In this context, flood of the rivers of North Bengal and Assam are very much alarming for the people. The flood of the *Tista* along with its essential outcome got a prominent place in the *Tista Parer Brittanta*. Flood does not follow international border between India and Bangladesh since the *Tista* is a common river of both these countries. Hence, 'flood-induced displacement' is quite common in both sides of the rivers. This displacement is a universal feature. Debes Ray has illustrated this environmental phenomena as well as the 'envrionmnet –induced migration' with great care.⁹

The *Tista Parer Brittanta* ends with the construction of a barrage in the *Tista* in the 1980s. This barrage was much needed for three reasons- (a) flood control, (b) irrigation for agriculture, and (c) supply of water to other rivers. For the Rajbanshi landed class, this barrage was/ is a symbol of interruption to their settled and peaceful lives. It appeared as a matter of challenge for the Rajbanshi community as a whole. So the Uttar Khand Dal (UKD) had tried to mobilise the feeling of the Rajbanshis in the 1980s. It had instigated the Rajbanshis to raise their voice for— (a) a separate state in North Bengal called Uttar Khanda or Kamtapur, (b) to protect the culture of

the Rajbanshis, and (c) to stop the construction of the 'Tista Barrage' at the cost of the landed Rajbanshis.¹⁰

However, the novelist has aptly identified that the Rajbanshis were/are not united to raise their protests against the development projects sponsored by the state. Again, the 'self-contradiction' of a community along the 'class line' did not allow the feeling of regionalism of the Rajbanshi to persist for long. Simultaneously, Debes Roy had apprehended that the natural relationship of the people of the *Tista* basin would be changed rapidly after the completion of the *Tista* project. It would be a matter of research for the future novelists and historians.¹¹ So the *Tista* is not merely river. It is truly an international one in terms of environmental history.

Kalahi Nadi Ikul Hikul: The Struggle for a Nationhood

'*Kalahi Nadi : Ikul Hikul*' is an Assamese novel by Dr. Jitendra Das. The manuscript of this novel won best prize from the Kamrup Sahitya Parishad in 1988-89. It was published as a complete novel in 1989.¹² Though the title of the novel has been taken from a folksong of the basin of the *Kalahi* river of Assam, but it has illustrated the struggle of the people of entire Assam with a broader perspective. In the preface, the novelist has confessed that '*Kalahi Nadi : Ikul Hikul*' is a collection of plural stories and realities of the Assamese society, politics, culture, economy, history, regionalism, and folklore and of course the public memories of Assam.¹³

Kalahi Nadi: Ikul Hikul (both sides of the *Kalahi* river) begins not with any river but with a floodplain lake popularly called '*Deepar Beel*'. Along with a brief historical background of '*Deepar Beel*', Jitendra Das has given a brief description of the people of this floodplain lake. One of the main characters of the novel named Mahima Bai is a fisherwoman. She hailed from Kukurmara village of the bank of *Deepar Beel*. She and her sons catch fish from the '*Deepar Beel*' as well from the *Kalahi*. She sells them in the market as well as among the villagers of her locality since she lost her husband.¹⁴ Jitendra Das has illustrated Mahima Bai as a symbol of true spirit of the Assam society. She does not 'care' anyone. The novelist wrote, 'Mahima Bai is a free woman. She aspires to remain always free. Mahimabai is a self-dependent lady. She knows that beggary is the worst thing of the world. She knows that poverty and sorrows are quite common in life. But Mahimabai does not take them very seriously'.¹⁵ Mahimabai feels proud for rich history and culture of her land.

The central character of the novel is an Assam Civil Servant (ACS), Mr. Balin Thakuria (SDC). He has also come from the locality of Mahimabai-the *Kalahipar*. In his childhood, Balin was brought up by Mahimabai (in their village called Chaygaon) as a very caring nurse. Mahimabai knows everything about Balin including his favourite foods, fruits, dress and habits.¹⁶

This close relationship (like mother and child) soon transformed into a matter of dilemma when Balin Thakuria had arrested the kinsmen of Mahimabai on the charge

of creating disturbance and violating law and order. This disturbance was created against the outsiders which was popularly called *Bideshi Kheda* (expulsion of the foreigners). It was a very critical time in Assam. Entire Assam was engulfed with the *Bideshi Kheda* and *Bangal Kheda* (expulsion of the Bengalese) movement especially in 1979. The novelist has explained the background of the student movement of Assam including political aspiration of Abida Ahmed [wife of the former President of India Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed (1974-1977)] and its consequences.¹⁷ The people of Assam especially the young students did not accept the political aspiration of the Congress-led political leaders of Assam. It eventually resulted into the death of a large number of unarmed students. This incident had sparked the silent feelings of the 'Assamese Nationalism'!

This novel took a new turn with this incident. Jitendra Das has given a detailed description of the *Bideshi Kheda* movement. The illustrated the feeling of the Assamese nationalism with the following songs:

(a) 'O, CRP Hussiar!
O, Bideshi Namaskar!
Karibo je lagibo Sonar Assam pariskar'.¹⁸

(b) *Ejani, unaish unashi san
Assame kare Andolan,
Bideshihire bhare Amar Assam
Nedu Nedu Sonar Ahom*.¹⁹

These songs indicate that the people of the *Kalahi* basin of Assam had aspired to expel the outsiders. In was actually 23rd June 1979, the students of Guwahati University had decided to go for an 'all Assam strike'. They successfully organized this strike on 10th June 1979.²⁰

The novelist has also given a brief history of expulsion of the so-called foreigners in the 1960s. He has described it with a very minor character of the novel but very close to Balin Thakuria and Mahimabai. He was Matibar, a member of a Muslim migrant family from East Pakistan. Matibar, along with his family and other migrants from East Pakistan were expelled from the *Kalahi* locality in 1962. Incidentally, the novelist has described the story of large scale migration of the Bengali Muslim cultivators from East Bengal to Assam and its consequences before and after the independence of India (1947). Concurrently, he has described the settlement of the Nepalis and the Punjabis in Assam [including the *Kalahi* basin]. He has aptly illustrated the *Kalahi* basin as a symbol of 'mini-India'. So the novelist has raised a very serious question about the meaning of 'outsider' in case of Assam. The central character of this novel (Mr. Balin Thakuria) thinks that the people those who born and brought up in Assam and have contributed to the struggle of Assam are very much Assamese! They should not be considered as 'outsiders' at any cost.

However, the novelist has illustrated a different picture regarding the 'Bengali-speaking people' of Kachar region of Assam (popularly called the *Bangali/Bangal* or *Siloittya Bangali*). He wrote: 'the Bengalis despite living in Assam are not interested to acquire the knowledge of the Assamese language.'²¹ Even he described in details about the background of the language movement of the 'Bengali speaking people' of Assam. However, the novelist is very much conscious about the futility of difference between the Assamese and the Bengalese. He has given two examples of miserable death of two persons of the *Kalahi* basin 'only for linguistic difference'. One was an Assamese and the next one was a Bengali.²² He described that a Bengali young man was brutally murdered by the Assamese because he was merely a Bengali. Again, an Assamese man was tortured by the Bengalese in such a way that he lost his eyes and later committed suicide.²³ And he was the husband of Mahimabai, one of the main characters of the novel.

Kalahi Nadi has occasionally dealt with the growth of the Communist movement in Assam including the story of Bishnu Prasad Rabha (1909-1969). The nexus between the business class and the government servants and the suffering of the common people had contributed to the growth of a feeling in favors of the communist movement in Assam especially among the common masses of Assam. Thus the economic struggle of the working class, peasantry and the tribal people of the *Kalahi* basin got a prominent place in this novel. As a whole, the novelist has presented a picture of struggle of people of the *Kalahi* basin in multiple perspectives:

- (a) The Assamese people (especially the educated middle class) were/are very much concerned about the question of domination of the so-called 'outsiders/ foreigners/
- (b) 'The Bengali speaking people' were/are more concerned about their 'identity' including their language and culture.
- (c) The landed and politically dominant Assamese were/are more interested on their political future.
- (d) The common people of Assam of course were/are conscious about the economic exploitation and sufferings.

This complex situation turned violent when the All Assam Student Union (AASU) called for an 'Assam strike' in 1979. The strike as well as the internal contractions among the political elites had eventually ended with the death of Mahimabai with the bullet of the police.

The main character (Mr. Balin Thakuria) observed that the death of Mahimabai has appeared as a matter of political capital for both the supporters of the Congress (I) and the followers of the Assam movement. It led to the growth of further complexity when Mr. Balin Thakuria was charged by the people for the death of Mahimabai. The people attacked on Balin Thakurai. What he will do now? Will he

complexity when Mr. Balin Thakuria was charged by the people for the death of Mahimabai. The people attacked on Balin Thakurai. What he will do now? Will he resign from the government service or issue on order for arresting assailants? The novelist has raised this question and asked the readers to search for its probable answer.

Observations

Tistaparer Brittanta and *Kalahi Nadi : Ikul Hikul*-both are basically political novels. Here, the rivers have been used as the symbols of political aspirations of people. Both the novels have been written for understanding the aspirations and contradictions of people of North Bengal and Assam respectively [especially of the critical situation of the 1970s and 1980s]. Both Debes Roy and Jitendra Das have illustrated the rivers as the marker of 'community' and 'nationality'. However, these novels are equally important to realize the environmental history of both Northern part of West Bengal and Assam.

One common feature of these novels is the 'land question'. The question of ownership on land, mode of agricultural operation and continuity of semi-feudal system and exploitation of 'labour value' are essentially linked with traditions, climate and the quality of soil. Both Debes Roy and Jitendra Das have argued that the regions of their study had remained backward under the pre-colonial and colonial state. However, the state apparatus for exploiting forests, wild animals, rivers, and other natural resources and the mechanism for maximizing the revenue began to develop in the regions under the colonial rule. This trend had contributed to the migration of people from different corners of India to these regions. However, it was a tolerant growth till 1947.

The population overflow had appeared as a very serious problem after 1947 especially due to the 'conflict-induced migration' from East Bengal/ East Pakistan/ Bangladesh. The new migrants initially were received by the 'hosts' with great care and sympathy however, the hosts soon felt that new comers have been transformed into their enemies. They even found that the new comers have established their domination in every aspect of life [including education, culture, economy and politics]. Again both the West Bengal and Assam government did not address their problems very seriously. Naturally, the pre-settled communities [like the Rajbanshis of North Bengal and the Assamese of Assam] were looking for redressal of their material and cultural problem under the '*Bideshi kheda*' movement. Thus the 'Assam movement' and 'the Kamtapuri/ Uttarkhand movement' have received considerable attention of the poor people, educated middle class and the declining landed class. The communists were in dilemma. In West Bengal, the Left Front government had remained confined only with the vesting of land and its distribution.

So the 1970s and 1980s have been illustrated by the novelists with a broader perspective. Both the novelists were familiar with the complexity of movement for the expulsion of the outsiders. They had close relations with the characters of their novels.²⁴ They used the local dialect/ language [Kamtapuri/ Rajbanshi by Debes Roy and South Kamrupi by Jitendra Das] and illustrated the local traditions , folklores, history and cultural features to present the people of the *Tista* basin and the *Kalahipar* in a broader society of India. In fact, both of them have identified ‘mini India’ in the *Tista* basin as well as in the *Kalahi* basin. So it appears that the *Tista* and the *Kalahi* rivers are not merely rivers! They are carrying the history of their people [material, social, cultural and of course political]. They are still flowing with all the political and economic developments [including the construction of *dams*, barrages, bridge and irrigational canals]. Though the novelist of the *Kalahi Nadi: Ikul Hikul* did not give any answer towards the consequences of the developments in the *Kalahipar*, Debes Roy had aptly indicated towards the post-barrage life of people of the *Tista* basin.

Notes and References

¹Debes Roy, *Tistaparer Brittanta* ,16th edn., ,Kolkata, Dey’s Publishing, 2013, (henceforth *Tista Parer Brittanta*), Introductory page.

²For details, see Abhijeet Das, *Tista: Utsa theke Mohana* , Kolkata, Ekhn Duars, 2019.

³For details, see D. Bandyopadhaya, ‘Land Reforms in West Bengal: Remembering Harekrishna Konar and Benoy Choudhury’, *Economic and Political Weekly*, XXXV, no.21 and 21,7th May 2000.

⁴*Proceedings of the First Annual Conference of the Siliguri Zonal Kshatriya Samity*, dated 8th April, 1955.

⁵*Memorandum submitted to the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Commission by the Cooch Behar District Depressed Classes League*, dated 29th April, 1961.

⁶D.Bandyopadhaya, *op.cit*, p.1796.

⁷*ibid.*, p.1797.

⁸Government of West Bengal: *Hataman Jara Tulechhe Shir (Bengali)*, Calcutta, Department of SC and ST, 1987, p.7; Dinesh Dakua: *Kamtapuri Andolon Ekti Jana Bichhinna Andolan*, Calcutta, National Book Agency Pvt. Ltd,2003), pp.30-31.

⁹*Tista Parer Brittanta*, p.268.

¹⁰*ibid.*, p.431.

¹¹*ibid.*, pp. 495-504.

¹²Jitendra Das: *Kalahi Nadi: Ikul Hikul* (Henceforth *Kalahi Nadi*), Guwahati, Chandra Prakash, 1989, Illustration page.

¹³*Kalahi Nadi*, p. ii.

¹⁴Mahima Bai’s husband was tortured by the Bengali-speaking people as a revenge of anti-Bengali feeling of the Assamese in the 1960s. The Assamese-Bengali riots and the attitude of the Assam Government had a disruptive impact on the people of , Chhaygaon the region of the novel.

¹⁵*Kalahi Nadi*, p. 7.

¹⁶*ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

¹⁷On the eve of election of 1979, the movement became very serious in Assam. In Barpeta Constituency, an young leader Mr. Khageswar Talukdar was brutally tortured by the police who was found dead. Later, he was recognized as the 'first martyr of the Assam movement'. *Kalahi Nadi*, p 17.

¹⁸*Kalahi Nadi*, p. 22, Meaning: (Hello ! CRPF, be careful. Ohh ! Foreigner goodbye! We'll have to clean the Golden Assam from you). *Translated by Self*.

¹⁹*Kalahi Nadi*, p. 26. Meaning: It is 1979, the people of Assam have started a movement. Entire Assam is full with the foreigners. We'll not hand over our golden Assam to them. *Translated by Self*.

²⁰*ibid.*, p.19.

²¹*ibid.*, p.64

²²*ibid.*, p. 70

²³*ibid.*

²⁴*ibid.*

Significance of Oral History Selection of Interviewees Preparation of Questionnaires and Techniques

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Abstract

The Oral history tradition has surpassed several generations. It heovering the neglected aspects of the past. The oral history sources have the tendency to bring new dimensions and concepts and to change the earlier perception of history. It provides great scope to look into historical aspects from an entirely different perspective. It is an art of collecting and preserving the historically significant aspects by way of recorded interviews. In this paper, an effort has been made to ascertain different categories of persons who could prove beneficial to gather historically relevant information, to acknowledge changes that had occurred in the process of conducting oral history interviews with the advent of advanced technologies and to ascertain the true significance of oral history for future generations.

Oral History is the most available source for the reconstruction of the past. The term 'oral history' is new, but it does not mean that it had no roots in the past. In fact, oral history is as old as history itself.¹ Oral tradition predominated in the pre-literate societies before the dawn of the civilizations. At that stage, all kinds of knowledge were imparted orally. Oral testimonies or oral traditions and oral evidences prevailed and dominated. Some writers are of the view that 'Oral History really goes back as far as Adam and Eve. When Eve ate the apple and told Adam about it that was beginning of Oral reminiscence'..²

John Malcolm significantly wrote in every research that into general history of mankind, it is of utmost essential importance to hear what a nation has to say of itself and knowledge obtained from such sources has a value independent of its historical utility. It aids the promotion of intercourse and leads to the establishment of friendship between the nations.³ Oral history fulfils this purpose as it brings to the forefront what different classes have to say about themselves.

The most distinguishable contribution of oral history is to discover such experiences and perspectives of people which otherwise remain 'hidden from history'.⁴ It is not necessary that oral history is a tool only for change. Its value depends upon the spirit in which it is used. Nevertheless, oral history certainly can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself, and open new areas of inquiry; it can break down barriers between teachers and students; between educational institutions and the world outside; between generations; and in the writing of history- whether in books, or museums, or radio and film - it can give back to the people who made history through their experiences and their own words, a central place. The essence of oral history has been very beautifully explained by Alessandro Portelli in these words:

'The task and theme of oral history—an art dealing with the individual in social and historical context—is to explore this distance and this bond (between 'history' and personal experience), to search out the memories in the private, enclosed space of houses and – without violating that space, without cracking the uniqueness of each spore with an arrogant need to scrutinize –to connect them with 'history' – and in turn force history to listen to them'.⁵

The major difference between the oral sources and written documents is that the oral sources could never be anonymous or impersonal, whereas in many cases we often found written documents created by some unidentified and unknown.⁶ 'The author of a written document is usually no longer living when the document is used by a historian - a feature of various privacy and ethical codes. In contrast, oral documents are derived from living persons; at least the initial recording of any such document on tape or paper is a product of living persons in conversation. Thus, whereas written documents are often referred to as dead letters, oral documents are generally styled living testimonies'.⁷

Oral history provides a level of accessibility to the past that often is missing from other forms of history, and this is one of the primary reasons why it is so popular among historians and students. The raw material for the local history is the

human memory which of course serves only as long as its possessor lives and it often deteriorates even sooner. Preserving and disseminating of this is a worthwhile endeavour. Every death is a potential loss of a narrator and thus an absolute loss of societies' collective historical memory.

In recent years historians have recognized oral evidences as a significant method of collecting evidences particularly for writing the history of people. In fact, history of the people cannot be authentic if oral evidences are not properly collected and used. Oral history is the collection and the study of historical information about individuals, families, important events, or everyday life using audiotapes, videotapes, or transcriptions of planned interviews. These interviews are conducted with the people who participated in or observed past events and whose memories and perceptions of these are to be preserved as an oral record for future generations. Oral history strives to obtain information from different perspectives and most of these cannot be found in written sources. Oral history also refers to information gathered in this manner and to a written work (published or unpublished) based on such data, often preserved in archives and large libraries. Yet, if oral history has the potential to highlight the individual experiences of past events and reassert our inherent agency as people, it is not without its pitfalls. A skilled historian approaches oral testimony with a critical eye.

The British historian, Paul Thompson writes, 'oral sources have an equal potential for exploring the political attitudes and personal lives of the more typical unknown activists, and equally of the unorganized, quiescent majority of the population'.⁸ Oral history was established in 1948 as a modern technique for historical documentation when the Columbia University historian Allan Nevins began recording the memories of persons significant in American Life. In the *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, United States of America, Louis M. Starr (1917-1980 A.D.) who worked with Prof. Allan Nevins and subsequently succeeded him in 1958 as Director of the Oral History Project in the Columbia University has defined Oral History as 'Primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words - generally by means of planned tape recorded interviews of persons deemed to harbour hitherto available information worth preserving, it is more than a tool and less than a discipline'.⁹

In history, great changes and new trends made headway. The focus of history has moved away from the political history of kings, rulers and white-collared officials to the writing of 'New' social, economic and culture histories wherein the ordinary women is put back into historical narratives, and wherein historians have turned

their investigation to the development of group identities, particularly workers, peasants, racial and ethnic types.

Oral history has been shown to be an invaluable means by which to recover the past of the inarticulate-women, the working class, ethnic and racial minorities, and people in non-literate societies¹⁰ because these groups rarely leave written records of their lives; the meager documentary evidence about them is usually biased against them and rarely penetrates to the ideational and they have largely been ignored by historians who view history in terms of 'big men' and 'important' events.¹¹ Besides being a tool for recovering history, oral history forges a link between the academy and the community through ethnographic field techniques and participant observation; and it has a potential for raising social consciousness and can provide strategies for social change.¹²

The local historian contributes more to the history because he talks about the common people, their living conditions, their manners, their customs etc. This huge amount of information is not ordinarily provided by the so-called traditional historians. In a relative sense oral history offers immensely more to the subject or social and folk history than it does to the political history. This egalitarian bent is conspicuous feature of the oral history. In contrast, the oral literary products are collective rather than individual creations. At the same time, it is true that there might be a person who happened to have composed a tale in accordance with the culturally defined compositional conventions. The tale, if lives after the death of its creator, must be related orally to the oral-aural transmission process and it is possible that the work is rarely transmitted to new audiences as the creator had made it. Thus, there are fair chances of modification in the form and a little change in the contents. There will be an alteration with each new transmitter and with every change in period.

In the oral literature, there is greater rapport between the narrator and the receiver; there is a living contact; there is greater immediacy, empathy and spontaneity; there is greater freedom of language, expression and gesticulation than it is in the written literature. The oral literature in this way is a living literature, it is nearer to the folk, their lifestyle and mode of thinking; it is universal and belongs to everyone in the community.

In the opinion of Jan Vansina, oral traditions are recollections of the past which are verbally transmitted from generation to generation. Historical narrative is not the only aspect of oral tradition that can be recorded, collected and utilized. Sacred formulas, names, poetry, genealogies, folk tales, myths and legal precedents can be had from the oral tradition of African tribes.

The term oral history was coined by Professor Allan Nevins of Columbia University in 1948. Joe Gould (1889-1957) who compiled *Oral history of our Times* influenced him. Gould wrote about oral history, 'All at once idea of oral history occurred to me. I would spend the rest of my life going about the city, listening to people and writing about whether I heard them say that sounded revealing to me, no matter how boring or idiotic or vulgar or obscene it might sound to others'.¹³ About history he had his own ideas, he wrote, 'The history of a nation is not in parliament and battle fields but in what the people say to each other on fair days and high days and in how they farm, quarrel and go on pilgrimage'.¹⁴

Joe Gould and Allan Nevins had different conception of oral history. For Allan Nevins, preservation of oral history interviews was the most important step in creating oral history. But Gould had no idea of interview programme in oral history. His focus was on recording the scope of human experience as collected from oral testimonies. Gould and Nevins had in the beginning not only different ideas of oral history but they followed different methodology. Of course, Nevins was more scientific. He tried through oral history to conserve knowledge and experience that was being lost through lack of adequate records. He continued to use history in terms of describing his interview programmes. Thus, oral history became familiar nomenclature for interview project.

The tradition of keeping and preserving old record is a concept which is few centuries old in our country. The official communication was preserved in the record offices for its consultation for official use. Private individuals, writers or research scholars did not have access to these documents because these were strictly considered the property of state. With the passage of time, these documents were found to be in very bad shape-often moth or rust eaten, on an account of non-availability of their scientific preservation. Thus, we were deprived of the most valuable documents which, in fact, would have been very useful for penning the events of the past centuries. A systematic effort was, however, made by the British government in India, when the Raj began to have its deep roots in our soil. It took the cue from the India office Library, London and established the Imperial Record Office in Delhi, now called the National Archives of India. Similarly record offices have been established in almost every state of our country. The Oral History centre has been established, in a comprehensive way in the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, Teen Moorti House, New Delhi.

The main purpose and value of the oral history is to complement and supplement unpublished sources, e.g. official records and private papers and it was first recognized by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library in the year 1966 and it was taken as a part of its research activities. The Museum has done commendable job and one cannot but praise the said institution for its concerted efforts to serve the cause of creating new sources that will be available to all the interested scholars. The programme or the project of oral history undertaken by the Nehru Memorial Museum and Library, perhaps caught the eye of our historians and as a result, rather belatedly, considered the importance of the programme and its usefulness as a source to supplement public records and private archives.¹⁵

In 1970, the oral history cell was established in the Department of Punjab Historical Studies.¹ More than 600 important individuals have been interviewed on different topics such as partition of Punjab and rehabilitation, Punjabi Suba movement, Jaito Morcha and Militancy movement.

The notion of oral history is based on the social and the democratic ideas of history. Oral testimony is a written source that is well suited for verbal communication from one generation to next. However, the technique of collecting oral traditions as a source material for historiography is of recent origin.

Oral history has widened the scope and the value of history as it is based on social and the democratic ideas of history. Till now, the focus of history had been the struggle for power in the field of politics, where economy, religion, labour classes and lowest strata of society, etc., were given no attention. Oral history has made, the life experiences of people of all kinds high and low, as basis for writing history. History established the process of transformation in the subject of history by introducing new evidences, by shifting the focus of inquiry, and by opening new areas of inquiry.

Selection of Interviewees

It is always beneficial to carry out a general background research of the people to whom one wants to interview as it will help in getting desired results. The oral history material in the form of transcripts is the result of a long and arduous process. In a nutshell, first, the person who is to be interviewed, i.e. interviewee is chosen. Then a questionnaire is sent to him in advance. Thirdly, the interview is conducted by the interviewer and the recollections are recorded. During the interview, supplementary questions are also raised. Fourthly, after the completion of interview, it is transcribed, checked, edited and then sent to the interviewee for vetting and approval. He may make such amendments as he deems fit. Finally, the transcript is ready and available for consultation to the scholars.

It will thus be observed that the main contribution in the collection of oral history material is essentially of the interviewee. No doubt, the interview is initiated by the interviewer, who primarily decided as to who should be interviewed and prepares questions keeping in mind what is expected of the interviewee. And while the interview is in progress, again it is the interviewer's capability, patience, tact, etc., which may go in the long way to draw out the best from the interviewee. But the fact remains that the recollections, reflections, opinions, analysis of different circumstances and above all the expressions that made the material significant and worthwhile, eventually belongs to the interviewee. But, it is not to minimize the contributions of the interviewer. In fact, it is the interviewer who selects the interviewee and then prepares a questionnaire. It should be always borne in mind that the interviewee, while speaking of his good old days can usually remains too secretive or too talkative. So, the questionnaire should be drawn up in such a manner that the interviewee -especially if the subject matter is official or religious - should not be allowed to go off tangent or speaking irrelevances.

There are certain factors that must be kept in mind while selecting the persons for interview. Such persons who have good firsthand information related to the topic should be covered. It is desirable that they have strong power of observation as well as sharp memory.¹⁷ Now, who should be an interviewee? Or who should be selected for an oral history interview? In the context of public life in India, all those connected with important political events or movements either as participants or as witnesses or those who came into contact with such leaders may be interviewed; but it must be made sure that the information thus obtained is useful in one way or the other as source material as spelt out above. Secondly, an interviewee should be able to give expressions to what he had experienced.

Since anyone in the social set up can be used as an interviewee, it is necessary to categorize them. In the first instance, we should prepare a list of those who directly participate in socio-economic and political activities of society, such as political leaders of the trade union movements of workers and peasants, leaders of social organization, members of the village panchayats, community leaders, etc. Thus, it would include both formal and informal leaders of urban and rural areas. In the second category we may include the elite of the society, such as civil servants, military officers, educationists, judges, lawyers, scientists and artists. In most cases, the people of this category do not directly participate or lead movements of society. Nevertheless, they are the close observers of most sensitive responses and reactions of the events. They are relatively more objective as they are more rational in their observations. Since they are highly qualified, intelligent and disciplined, they tend

to express their personal opinions or views which are critical and generally unbiased. But this is not suggested that only 'great men' should be selected to be interviewed. Even those about whom enough is not known, *i.e.*, 'grass-roots' of some movement or event, can certainly provide first-hand material. For example, in Punjabi Suba movement, the role and contribution of common masses is very significant and such people can provide authentic eye-witness accounts.

We may include peasants and industrial workers as another category of individuals to be interviewed. In almost all the movements such persons join as the followers and generate movements through their actions or participation. It would be a greatest folly to ignore them for the source of action lies within them. A random survey or interview of such people would provide historian a peep into the socio-economic problems confronting them and their psyche. How they view leadership of organization, how they feel socio economic crisis facing them and how they are aroused to actions are some of the most significant aspects which can help in writing the history of masses.

There is another set of people who can be categorized as witnesses. Although they did not have any direct role in decision-making or some kind of active participation in some event, yet they had, however, the opportunity to witness things very closely. If a witness is a keen observer, he can recall the past events in a clear manner. It is, however, not to suggest that the witness is non-participant, he can be a participant in some other context. For instance, at the time of Partition and Rehabilitation, Eastern Punjab Hindus and Sikhs were not affected as such, but they had clearly seen the plight of those displaced persons who migrated from Pakistan Punjab and assumed their problems. Here, such a person is not a participant but an observer or a witness. The one advantage of such a witness is that he cannot glorify his own role in relation to the subject he is dealing with. One caution to be taken about such a witness is his reliability; and once, it is established, he can be selected for an oral history interview. Similarly, there can be several other such persons who can be interviewed. Sometimes a friend or associate of a displaced person can also be termed as a witness if he had long-standing acquaintance with him at some given time. If he is in knowledge of certain facts, he can be chosen for recording. A near relation of a legendary hero or heroine of the recent past is another person who can be interviewed for purely, if not otherwise, biographical material.

There may be individuals who strictly do not fall within what has been cited above but have their own peculiar value in helping to gather oral history material. It is really a difficult task to evaluate the reliability and truthfulness of the information gathered through the process of interview. It depends upon the capability of the interviewer to properly locate and gather oral history material and draw out the best results. Therefore, individual is not interviewed because he just happened to be a participant or witness. It also does not matter how long or short his period of involvement had been. For the purpose of

oral source material, it is taken into consideration whether the person can give something useful information related to the theme or topic. if the answer is 'yes' he is a fit case for oral history interview.

It is always good to make a list of possible narrators. Therefore, the interviewer must decide who should be interviewed first. In other words, preferences can, if it is thought advisable, be drawn. The older people should be approached first for obvious reasons. However, some may say that they have a problem of memory. From general experience, it has been noticed that the old people in normal health generally have excellent memory. At times, their description of certain event is photographic. Why is it so? It is for the psychologists to answer.

When the number of surviving people connected with a very important event is limited, efforts should be made to record their reminiscences at an early date. If their recollections are not tapped in time, it is possible that we may subsequently get second-hand information. Where the official or other record is scanty and the participants are the only ones who can reconstruct the event/events, they should be preferred. Ordinarily an individual with a long span of participation in which he held key positions and is having a very sharp memory should be given preference to others of his age, e.g. Participation as a member or official at the time of rehabilitation of refugees during Partition. Yet there are participants and witnesses who have been spokesmen, writers of statements, manifestos, communique, books, memoirs, etc. They are apparently well equipped to give expression to the past events with ease. Their mind is also analytical. They are articulate. If not for bare facts, they can reminisce about events, in a proper historical perspective. One is tempted to this class of individuals. But one must be very careful that they do not repeat the same events, in various contexts to glorify their own role again and again. It is the art of the interviewer, how best he can critically define the contributions made by such people and make use of them so far as gathering of oral history material is concerned.

The most important thing to be kept in mind is the availability of the interviewee, even though he has been selected in pursuance of the considerations enumerated above. The experience has shown that interviewees rarely agree to interview at the first instance. The suggestion usually meets with resistance; the idea of talking candidly about one's participation is not, as a rule, readily accepted because of varieties of reasons. Doubts can be resolved by personal meeting and discussions. Again, there are problems of dates, place, sickness, unforeseen circumstances, etc., etc. Sometimes, there are administrative difficulties. Consequently, sometimes it is not possible to pick up people for interviews according

to the schedule one might have drawn. Under such circumstances, which are also practical, to pick up all those who otherwise qualify according to what have been listed above, to be interviewees. In terms of sheer practicability, an example is warranted. For instance, one has gone to interview a person, who is his first preference, in certain town. Such an opportunity can profitably be utilized to include others who are there even though they are not of the same standing.

There cannot be very hard and fast rules for the selection of interviewees. As pointed out earlier, there is no dearth of people who can usefully be exploited for oral history evidence and if any occasion affords an opportunity, it should be made use of as a matter of expediency irrespective of preferences. Sometimes, it may happen that when the actual interview is commenced, it is discovered that the interviewee is not what was expected of him or it may in no way prove useful, then the interview, after due consideration, may be given up. But it must be remembered that the interviewee should under no circumstances be made to feel that he is not 'important'. Here again the job of the interviewer is very delicate. In another case, if it is found that the interviewee has something to tell but is struggling as to how to express and convey his reminiscences, the attempt should not be given up. The tape-recorder should stop. The interviewer may conduct informal discussions again and try to locate and identify what the interviewee wants to say, make him feel comfortable and relaxed and then conduct the interview in such a way that the useful possible results are obtained.

When the interviewee has agreed to be interviewed, the next step is to have a questionnaire. Do we really need a questionnaire? Some may argue that whatever the interviewee knows, he would like to pass on for record. Therefore, the job of the interviewer is to place the tape-recorder before him and by way of formality ask simple questions about his early life and then the interviewee and the interviewer would go on to a free dialogue with no set of questions. The result will be that the conversation will take its own course. But in this process many tapes and long hours of sittings are consumed, and all sorts of things are recorded. This can also be very expensive. The focus towards the topic could be lost in the mass of information given by the interviewee and later it becomes difficult to decide as what to be eliminated. Again, it may not only involve a lot of work, but it may also lead to distortions, in some cases, interview is altogether devoid of its usefulness. In the hands of an experienced interviewer and if this method suits the interviewer's personality, good results can nevertheless be achieved.

Preparation of Questionnaires

The preparation of a questionnaire is also an important step in the interview process. A worthwhile interview is likely to result only from a well-designed questionnaire. Actually, 'a properly constructed and administered questionnaire may serve as a most appropriate and useful data-gathering device. The careful preparation of a good questionnaire requires intelligence, a great deal of time and hard-work'.¹ To have questionnaire ready well in advance may afford numerous advantages. First, the interviewee will naturally have a chance to brush up his memory and would decide what questions are to be answered and in what manner. And what is to be omitted, and yet, what other information is to be added. It will make the position of the interviewer also easy for he has especially studied the theme on which the questionnaire is based. He can assist by providing a little bit of information here and there, such as names, dates, etc. to the interviewee if he gets struck up temporarily during his recording.

It is not to say that the questionnaire should be treated as sacrosanct. Rather it should make the interview loosely controlled. In other words, if the interviewee departs from a question and strays on some other memory, the interviewer should not interrupt him; he should be allowed to complete that story, but as soon as he has done so, the interviewer may remind him about the main theme and in this process, all the questions will be covered one by one. And the same time the interview will remain flexible. Whatever method is adopted, it ultimately depends on the skill of the interviewer and the response of the interviewee. By way of generalization, it may be said that the questionnaire should not be a very rigid frame of reference, it should be flexible. It can be used in whatever manner it can prove best. Nonetheless, it is always better to have questionnaire.

To prepare a questionnaire, the first requisite is a brief biographical sketch of the interviewee. In some cases, it is available in reference books like 'who is who'. Otherwise, the same may be obtained from the interviewee himself. Obviously, it is always better if the biodata is secured from the interviewee himself. It is always necessary to study the background of the interviewee. The next step would be to look up the available information on the events in which he took part. Additionally, his writings, if any, may also be seen. Thirdly, information already gathered about him, through oral interviews with others who have been his associates or comrades, may also be taken advantage of. Obviously, this involves considerable preparatory work.

It is virtually an art of probing, to get proper information when the questions have been asked but to start with, interviewer must ask brief, simple and singular

questions. The questions must not be very lengthy and complicated. Such types of questions will be difficult to be answered by a narrator. It does not mean that interviewer should ask the question in yes or no forms. It is because that this will restrict the narrator to illustrate the point thoroughly. He will be compelled to answer in brief. Unnecessary interpretation/interruptions during interview by asking frivolous questions hinder smooth flow of interview. The interruption of often switching off the tape recorder can also create irritation during interview.

The scheme of asking the questions depends upon the desired target or goal of the project. The questions to the narrator should be in some chronological order starting with general questions followed by more specific ones at later stage. The first introductory question is the most important in so far as the scholar comes to know all about the man whose interview he is going to conduct. This also enables the interviewee to settle down for the questions that will follow the formal introductory questions. The interviewer must not ask questions haphazardly so that the narrator will not feel uneasy while giving answers to the questions. It is good to avoid asking extremely complicated or continuous overlapping questions for a long time as it really make difficult for the narrator to explain the point. Similarly, immediately starting with the main question is not advisable, one should try to build up the momentum up to the climactic questions by establishing the historical setting while simultaneously keeping the interviewee more comfortable at all times.¹⁹ The interviewer should strive to prompt informative dialogue through challenging and perceptive enquiry. The interviewer should expand the enquiry beyond their immediate needs. Interview should be completed as fast as possible because this can be used by other researchers, which may not be beyond the immediate target.

If a biographical sketch is to be written then questions pertaining to the interviewee's whole life should be included. It may include his name, present address, year of birth, year of marriage, activities and life at home when he was child; then about his parents, family life after marriage, etc. If an interviewee is a retired military or civil officer or a politician or had participated in freedom movement of the country or in some regional morchas then the questions about his personal life should be brief. But that must include about his life before joining any service or morchas. Interviewer should guard against possible social injury or exploitation of interviewee and should conduct interview with respect and human dignity. Each interview should be selected based on 'demonstrable potential for imparting information of lasting value'.²⁰

The framing of questions varies from one interviewee to another. There cannot be a standardized questionnaire. It is not to suggest that this is a general rule. If the information which is to be sought on some specific episode or event, similar questions can be put to a set of interviewees, but here again the question for each should be framed in such a way as to get the best from each interviewee. A standardized questionnaire can be useful, with some amendments here and there, for those researchers who are specializing on single subject and themselves are conducting oral interviews from people for eliciting information on several events, subjects, personalities, etc. Every questionnaire should be according to the dictate of the participation of the interviewee. Apart from the questionnaire already prepared, the interviewer can frame supplementary questions, if necessary, while the interview is in progress, besides he would mentally feel himself in that period and this will make the rapport with the interviewee which is, as said before, very much desirable. Supplementary questions are necessary and, therefore, part of the questionnaire.

It depends upon the interviewer to decide about the number and type of questions considering the nature of topic as well the interviewee. If the interviewee has participated in an event and his span of participation is restricted, naturally the number of questions will be limited. Efforts will be to elicit information on his participation from different angles. That the approach will be to frame as many questions as possible to cover all the aspects of his restricted role. The answers will have their value for they will not only be in detail but may also build up the story line. In case of an interviewee, who has varied experience, extending to his whole life span, the questionnaire will include various themes necessarily not related to one another. For example, if he had been an administrator in a native state before independence, then, in the post-independence era, a diplomat, then an educationist and finally a constructive worker besides he had other interests such as scouting, rural uplift, social work, etc., over the years the questionnaire can be split into various themes after a formal questions about his past, education and atmosphere under which he grew, etc. The interview should finally end up with a question concerning his reminiscences of all those with whom he had come into contact over the years. The last question may appear to be somewhat repetitive in view of what has preceded but it has its own value so far as information about personalities is brought at one end.

The questions should absolutely be clear and precise about the nature of information sought after with reference to the exact gaps in the information available

through other means. As far as possible, effort must be made to relate each question with its previous one so that it helps the interviewee to remember the distant past in proper perspective. Now, each theme of the questionnaire is, an independent questionnaire but while moving from one theme to another, a question, which should not be part of the written questionnaire, may be asked, while recording, giving touch to his personal life. The question may be like, what were the circumstances responsible for the change, etc.? This will make the change smooth for him to pass on to the next phase of his life and theme and again afford the reader to know all about the man and his background.

The questions should cover all the aspects related to the theme or topic. In other words, a limited number but at the same time covering all aspects, of questions which should be at once related to one another may be clubbed together under one theme. But each question should strictly list one query only, though all the related queries should come one after another. It should be noted that whether the theme remains one, e.g. Farmers' suicides, but it can include more than one aspect which demand an absolute independent treatment. There is no specific format with overall questioning technique as such. But the care must be taken for that each new aspect, which was put after the previous one, must be answered separately. So, each query should be given proper sequence as Q.1, Q.2, Q.3 and so on. If all the questions are put together, it may be possible that the interviewee will pick up the questions in random manner according to his own choice, e.g. if the interviewee pick up the last query and start with his answers, it would take him too far to make him forget the earlier queries of the same nature and it tends to break the continuity of the theme. This may, in a way, embarrass the interviewer to ask the interviewee all over the same process again. The systematic treatment with which the interview was to progress may get disturbed and consequently it may lead to certain problems at the time of editing.

Every question so far as possible should always be simple and straight-forward. It should be intelligible. It should not be, as a rule, overloaded. In this connection, all the selected questions may please be again glanced through, if it may feel necessary. The question should not be suggestive in the sense that it should not contain a cue for the interviewee for he would build up his answer on that which may unconsciously debar him from what he had originally in mind. For example, such questions like; what are the reasons for getting a loan? Why is farmer getting a loan? What are the problems with it and what are their solutions? What were the reasons behind the suicide, etc. can be asked. In research methodology there are

two types of a questionnaire. Firstly, the closed form or the restricted form and it provides for marking a 'Yes or No', or a short response. Secondly, the open form or unrestricted form. It provides free response in the interviewee's own words. It is the second type which is generally employed by historians as this helps in eliciting information.

The entire outcome of questioning greatly depends upon the capability of interviewer of listening and understanding the narrator. It is quite possible that one fails to grasp the real significance of what the narrator is saying due to interviewer's own false anxieties and assumptions.²¹ It is believed that no interview can be better than its questionnaire. An interview based on questionnaire is known structured interview. A good questionnaire can yield better results, better information from an interviewee. However, before preparation of a questionnaire, the following points must be kept in mind:

1. Questionnaire should be well structured and intelligible.
2. Questions should be clearly phrased. The interviewer should avoid suggesting an answer to the interviewees.
3. The questions should be brief, relevant, direct and clear.
4. The questions should be non-controversial.
5. The questions should not be rigid or inflexible.
6. The questions should always be as simple and as straightforward as possible.
7. The questions should be in the familiar language of the interviewees.
8. The questionnaire should not include those questions which made interviewee's think in interviewer's way rather than theirs.

In the end, it must be mentioned that no questionnaire is complete in itself. In order to extract maximum information, more supplementary questions must be prepared and put to interviewee as the interview develops. Much depends upon the capability of the interviewer as to how well he is educated and trained for the job and how well he does his home task before seeking an interview with a person. It is a highly technical job which requires presence of mind and skill to make oral evidence worthwhile for the scholars. A human being as an interviewee is likely to talk about too much and exaggerate his role while denigrating that of the others. For this purpose, it is also likely that interviewee suppresses or twists certain facts. For this and many other reasons interviewer's task is very hazardous as well. The needs of the time is that a course may be formulated and training be imparted by some institutions to produce efficient interviewers for the collection of oral evidence. It is also necessary for purposes of history to carefully document the views of

interviewee. Moreover, majority of the people including the literate ones do not leave their memoirs, autobiographical writings, personal diaries or correspondences, it becomes a moral obligation on the part of a historian or the institutions like the Oral History Cell to record the views of people relating to events for the use of future scholars. To serve those scholars fruitfully, we must take care of two aspects—the selection of interviewees and preparation of a good questionnaire.

It has been pointed out earlier that History primarily means collection of oral evidences for writing authentic history particularly of the contemporary period. The modern age is the age of revolutionary and democratic movements, the age of mass participation because of improved means of communication and transmission of information. To grasp the significance of oral evidence and its range demands certain qualifications from the interviewer. The individual gathering oral evidences must be a man of information himself. He must be aware of historical phenomenon of the period for which he is gathering evidences from the informants. Besides, such a person must have thorough understanding of other disciplines like psychology, sociology, social-anthropology, political science, economics, etc., for he is dealing with a person who has living contact with the total society. If he is lacking in any of the above-mentioned qualifications, he would not be able to extract the relevant and historically useful information from the interviewee. It has been beautifully remarked by Ron Grele that there always exists an untold tension between the ‘power of the narrative and the historian’s tendency to destroy the narrative’.²² It entirely depends upon the interviewer to make or break a good narrative at every stage ‘from interrupting a respondent’s flow by asking question at wrong time, to editing, cutting and manipulating the recording or transcript for the purpose of supporting an argument’.²³ If he is a competent one, he would select persons who possess the desired information, who are sufficiently interested in the socio-economic and political life of his period. The main criteria for collecting oral evidences should be the information regarding the actual happenings, observation on them or on movements. Equally significant from the point of view of history is the verification of known facts and the facts given by the interviewee. Oral histories can ‘sensualize the past, by taking historians outside the text and into the lives of people’.²⁴ The knowledge of the past helps ‘to refute myths, half-truths, fabrications and faulty perspectives and validates the story of the lived experiences’.²⁵ So, preference should be given to the person who has first-hand knowledge of a particular movement or event or *morchha*. Moreover, interviewee’s information should not be merely based on newspaper or hearsay. There must be comprehensive list of respondents pertaining

to all the categories mentioned above. The interviewer should see that statements are recorded correctly and yield desired outcome as per the chosen theme.

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Perception of Mahatma Gandhi and his Ideas in Occident

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Abstract

Mahatma Gandhi, his thoughts, his methodology of warfare, the way he led the movement and his message of peace have been issue of intense debate and discussion throughout the world among scholars, academics, politicians and the people. The paper tries to deliberate how the scholars and academics in the western world have viewed Mahatma Gandhi. There are accolades and appreciations as well as differing interpretations and criticism among scholars about Gandhian methodology and ideas. Some scholars seem to raise this question that was Gandhi as great as he has been portrayed, while there are opinions which believe that Gandhi was greater than he has been actually understood. In this light the present paper will cater and analyse the various opinion and will try to evaluate the role Gandhi played and influence he meted on the mind of present generation especially in the western world.

The paper deals with the opinion which despite little difference generally appreciates and confer accolade and finds relevance of Gandhian thought in the contemporary world, primarily criticism by some of the western thinkers which either partially and fully disagree with his methodology and ideas and the paper has attempted to bring a reasoned account to bring a proper synthesis of the way Mahatma Gandhi has been understood in the western world.

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well as differing interpretations and criticism among scholars about Gandhian methodology and ideas. Some scholars seem to raise this question that was Gandhi as great as he has been portrayed, while there are opinions which believe that Gandhi was greater than he has been actually understood. In this light the present paper will cater and analyse the various opinion and will try to evaluate the role Gandhi played and influence he meted on the mind of present generation especially in the western world.

The paper deals with the opinion which despite little difference generally appreciates and confer accolade and finds relevance of Gandhian thought in the contemporary world, primarily criticism by some of the western thinkers which either partially and fully disagree with his methodology and lastly it has attempted to bring a reasoned account to bring a proper synthesis of the way Mahatma Gandhi has been understood in the western world.

One of the most important doctrines of Gandhi was Satyagraha. Thomas Weber believes that the conflict resolution theory and related literature although emerged outside the knowledge of Satyagraha are complementary to the principle and goals of Satyagraha.¹ The Satyagraha has been compared by Lloyd Rudolf and Susanne Rudolf to the discourse on deliberative democracy propounded by Jurgen Habermas. They say that unlike the exclusive focus on the power of reason in Habermasian deliberation, Gandhi would argue that 'the heart must work together with the mind if deliberative processes are to produce shared truth'. For Gandhi, 'reason has to be strengthened by suffering; and suffering opens the eyes of understanding'.²

Satyagraha has been explained as an educational process not only to create among the satyagrahis an intense awareness of injustice and exploitation, but also to restore their dignity and self-respect and stir them to action. In this respect, Satyagraha shares a common goal with concepts like conscientisation and pacific socialization.³ American Civil Right Movement in 1950s and 1960s show similarities with Satyagraha in South Africa. The Civil Right Movement showed many of the traits of Vykom Satyagraha held in 1924-1925 in Kerala.

Gandhi's Satyagraha and its emphasis on suffering have a resonating effect on the conflict theory due to it's resembles with Christian ethic acquires a special place in the hearts of all people aspiring for justice and peace. James Douglass claimed, 'Gandhi concentrated his entire life and being on the Christic reality of suffering love, and through his experiments in truth, Gandhi committed himself to suffering love in such a way that the power of Christ was demonstrated in terms of a social and political revolution'.⁴ Gandhi's biographer, Louis Fischer, remarked that 'to pick up a pinch of salt in publicized defiance of the mighty Government, required imagination, dignity and the sense of showmanship of a great artist'.⁵

Webb Miller the American journalist who visited India during Salt satyagraha launched by Gandhi wrote on the 'New Freeman' an eyewitness's account on one of the brutal attack on salt satyagrahis and sufferings they wore at Dharasana in Surat District on 21st May, 1930, 'as the volunteers waded through the ditches and approached the barbed wire fence, the police ordered them to retreat. But they refused to obey. Suddenly, at a word of command scores of native policemen rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads with their steel-shod *lathis*. Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. Those struck down fell sprawling unconscious or writhing with fractured skulls or broken shoulders . . . the survivors, without breaking ranks, silently and doggedly marched on until struck down. Although everyone knew, that within few minutes he would be beaten down, perhaps killed, I could detect no signs of wavering or fear. . . there was no fight, no struggle; the marchers simply walked forward till struck down'.⁶

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German theologian and martyr, had summarized both Gandhi's law of life and that of the theology of the cross, 'Through love and suffering we enter the All and overcome it. . . Jesus Christ is the supreme revelation of this law of life but the Indian Messiah has given it powerful expression in our time'.⁷ For many genuine Christians in the west Gandhi's fasts were similar to the suffering of Jesus and hence special prayers were offered for Gandhi in Christian churches as expressions of solidarity with the cause for which he was undergoing the ordeal of suffering.

Ronald Terchek enlists Gandhi as a critic of the universalizing impulse and fatalism of grand narratives and argues that Gandhi's primary interest is in preserving the autonomy of individuals.⁸ He further maintains that Gandhi in order to open eyes of the people aims to have people question what is happening to them. He also wants people to decide that matters are not hopeless if they will act on their own convictions by overcoming fear and by challenging the entrenched power of the day as well as the orthodoxy of the time.⁹

Terchek has written on Gandhi's theory of autonomy as well as his idea of the reciprocal nature of rights and responsibilities. According to Terchek, the 'theory of autonomy' stands at the center of Gandhi's political philosophy. A distinguishing feature of this theory according to Gandhi is that, 'individuals not only deserve the freedom to pursue their moral projects honestly but they have the duty to do so'.¹⁰ The ways in which Gandhi relates freedom and duty, as well as rights and responsibilities, constitute his claim to political theory as much as that of Satyagraha.

Writing on the spinning wheel, Judith Brown remarked, 'it was of course an aspect of his rejection of the economics of Western civilization, but its benefit in Gandhi's eyes were far more specific in the work for Swaraj'.¹¹ On the merits of the

spinning wheel and the *khadi*, Brown points out, 'plying the wheel regularly and wearing *khadi* would break the barriers of caste, community and the educational level... More obviously, *khadi* would alleviate unemployment, prevent idleness and bring help to the very poor, while undermining...the profits of cotton exporters'.¹²

Erik H. Erikson, the noted psychoanalyst Calls Gandhi a prophet. He continues, 'he was soon to elevate the spinning wheel to significance as an economic necessity, a religious ritual and a national symbol'.¹³ According to Erikson, Gandhi's spinning wheel 'was also a symbol of a lost and regained identity'.¹⁴ Romain Rolland, the great pacifist has written in his biography, that Gandhi shook the foundations of the British Empire, and introduced into human politics the strongest religious impulse.¹⁵

John Haynes Holmes, an American clergy claims that the Khaddar cap, 'like the cross yesterday, is a spiritual symbol-the symbol of Gandhian triumph over the sword, of his disciples' promise of fidelity to him and of the victory of freedom which waits upon their cause'.¹⁶ J. Bondurant has significantly observed, 'Gandhi reinterpreted tradition in such a way that revolutionary ideas clothed in familiar expression were readily adopted and employed towards revolutionary ends'.¹⁷ As Bondurant has characterized it in her concept, the 'Gandhian dialectic', the particular social condition of non-truth a campaign sought to change was the *thesis*. The movement of protest and reform was the *antithesis*. Through nonviolent action, a more truthful *synthesis* of human needs and rights would emerge.¹⁸ Bondurant has further observed, 'a genuine Satyagraha campaign is, throughout, active and constructive, aggressive and sympathizing'.¹⁹

Some of the contemporary thinkers have observed that nonviolence has often been very successful against even the most brutal of opponents.²⁰ The famous writer William L Shirer, as a young American correspondent, met Gandhi and reported, 'I count the days with Gandhi the most fruitful of my life. No other experience was as inspiring and as meaningful and as lasting. No other so shook me out of the rut of banal existence and opened my ordinary mind and spirit, rooted in the capitalist West as they were, to some conception of the meaning of life on this perplexing earth. No other so sustained me through the upheavals and vicissitudes that I lived through in the years after I left India'.²¹

Gruber suggested that the extraordinary moral innovation of individuals like Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., be called 'creative altruism'. Gruber noted, 'Most altruistic behavior is limited to corrective action such as alleviating suffering. It can only occur when there is a discrepancy between the fortunes of the beneficiary and those of the benefactor, but it does not envision eliminating this gap; it only

hopes to lessen it. ... On the other hand, we can envisage and identify cases of 'creative altruism', in which a person displays extraordinary moral responsibility, devoting a significant portion of time and energy to some project transcending experience. Creative altruism, when it goes the limit, strives to eliminate the cause of suffering, to change the world, to change the fate of the earth'.²²

When Martin Luther King read Gandhi, his thinking concerning the power of love in solving social problems began to crystallize. He wrote, 'Gandhi was probably the first person in history to lift the love ethic of Jesus above mere interaction between individuals to a powerful and effective social force on a large scale. Love for Gandhi was a potent instrument of social and collective transformation. It was in this Gandhian emphasis on love and nonviolence that I discovered the method of social reform that I had been seeking for The intellectual and moral satisfaction that I failed to gain from the utilitarianism of Bentham and Mill, the revolutionary methods of Marx and Lenin, the social contracts theory of Hobbes, the 'back to nature' optimism of Rousseau, and the superman philosophy of Nietzsche, I found in the nonviolent resistance philosophy of Gandhi. I came to feel that this was the only morally and practically sound method open to oppressed people in their struggle for freedom'.²³

There was much in Gandhi that appealed to King: love, nonviolence, humility, self-sacrifice, good means to the good end, the obligation to take action against social evils, as well as other concomitants to these principles. Much of Gandhism would go into the formulation of the philosophy and technique of King's social protest movement. Theologian Niebuhr although disagreed with Gandhi's spiritual interpretations of non-violent resistance believed that Gandhi failed to understand the coercive nature of Satyagraha and the violence it can and did unleash. However, Niebuhr did perceive nonviolence as a 'particularly strategic instrument for an oppressed group which is hopelessly in the minority and has no possibility of developing sufficient power to set against its oppressors'.²⁴ In 1932, Niebuhr predicted that nonviolent resistance as a political and social strategy would provide the means for the second emancipation of Black Americans. He dismissed violence as a hopeless policy for Blacks to pursue.²⁵ It has been rightly summarized that 'Satyagraha makes the very process of conflict emergence, progression and final resolution an integrated transformational process'.²⁶

From the teachings of Christ and Gandhi, Martin Luther King learned the power of love in countering evil, however, paradoxically evil executed all three only to immortalize their universal thought. Christ provided the spiritual impetus; Gandhi supplied the method. Gandhi impressed King with the moral obligation not to cooperate with injustice but to break man-made rules if need be. Niebuhr awakened

and explained him nonviolence as the ideal technique for Black Americans to use in achieving emancipation.

Paul Wehr thinks that Gandhi structured a campaign in which if persuasion of an opponent had not been achieved before proceeding to a higher, more forceful level, Gandhi would withdraw with his movement for self introspection. Time, prayer and meditation, manual labor, strategic and tactical reconsideration...all of these would lead to a decision to take more forceful action or to reopen negotiation with opponents. Such a de-escalation would resemble what contemporary conflict specialists refer to as a 'loopback to negotiation'.²⁷ This calculated measure of de-escalation was effective in limiting the speed of Satyagraha by giving valuable time for wiser counsel, decisions and setting the tone of fresh round of struggle.

Howard Gardner argued in *Creating Minds* (1993) that 'Gandhi was a thinker of the highest order. The conception of Satyagraha was worked out as carefully as a philosophical system, with every step and its possible consequences carefully calibrated'.²⁸

The connections between Satyagraha and constructive programme by several western accounts have been interpreted as an unnecessary element. However activism in any field can be sustained only by involving in activities which are constructive, which promote positive attitudes in the minds of people. Constructive activities also referred as the passive phases of the struggle primarily involved programme such as women's empowerment, amity among communities, sanitation, spinning of Khadi, and other mass action programmes. It also enables the participants to develop positive attitudes. Towards the end of his life he insisted more on constructive programme and compared acts of civil disobedience without constructive work as like 'a paralysed hand attempting to lift a spoon'.²⁹

Robert Klitgaard has shown logically the contradictions of coercion in Gandhi's Satyagraha.³⁰ 'The opponent is forced to do something because of a threat to his own pay-off- a direct destructive threat pregnant with violence. Yet the doctrine of *Satyagraha* explicitly opposed any compulsion or coercion'.³¹ He thinks that Gandhi's non-violence is a social strategy. On the one hand, Gandhi considers it to be the right of every citizen to disobey unjust law, and on the other hand he threatens his adversary when he is disobeying the law.³² He says in principle, Gandhi does not give any place to threat, coercion and violence in his Satyagraha, but in practice, all come into play. The other criticism of Klitgaard runs as, 'we have the paradox of civil disobedience. One side says that a particular law is unjust and thus is obligated to disobey it, While the other side realizes that some sort of legal mechanism is necessary to make ideal democracy possible, and since no man can prescribe absolute truth, one is obligated to obey the law'.³³ Such 'paradox of civil disobedience' can

be understood by the concept of ideal democracy. Gandhi believes that there will be no need for disobedience of law in an ideal democracy because people will actively co-operate and the government will be run with the power of the people.

The American social activist Saul Alinsky believes that Gandhi's passive resistance was the only intelligent, realistic, expedient program which Gandhi had at his disposal; and that the 'morality' which surrounded this policy of passive resistance was to a large degree a rationale to cloak a pragmatic program with an essential moral power and that if he had guns he might have used them against the British.³⁴ He opines that passive resistance was the most available effective means for Gandhi to rid India of British control since Gandhi could not 'expect violent action from this large torpid mass'.³⁵ Such perception is primarily due to superficial understanding of Gandhi, his mission, method and ideals.

Gene Sharp is one of the important names in contemporary theory of pragmatic non-violence. He claims that Gandhi's approach to nonviolence is unrealistic and confusing.³⁶ Sharp consider Gandhi as eccentric and his religious symbolism and language are quite confusing.³⁷ Sharp has problem with Gandhian use of religion and morality in politics so he tries to secularise Gandhi, however later on he claims that he has his own brand of non violent alternative to war on a realistic and pragmatic line. He terms his non violence as having a technique approach while Gandhian non violence on religious, ethical and moral sanction he terms as conversion approach.³⁸

From his approach it looks that Gene Sharp belongs to a realist school of thought and he merely want to use non violence as a weapon to snatch power without having any ethical and moral considerations. He says, 'Nonviolent action is a technique by which people who reject passivity and submission, and who see struggle as essential, can wage their conflict without violence. Nonviolent action is not an attempt to avoid or ignore conflict. It is one response to the problem, of how to act effectively in politics, especially how to act effectively in politics, especially how to wield power effectively'.³⁹ He refers to nonviolence as an 'alternative weapons system' meant for combat, as is war.⁴⁰ It has been observed, 'Sharp does not emphasise the potential positively transformative effect of nonviolent action on either the activists themselves or on others, more or less limiting its use to a tool for achieving extrinsic goals'.⁴¹

Gene Sharp grossly fails to understand that non violence in not all about Satyagraha. He was quite blunt against mixing religion into politics based upon his western experience especially that of medieval Europe which brought secularism to the fore. While for Sharp the goal is power, for Gandhi the goal is truth. For

Gandhi, unless truth lies in the process truth can't be achieved. So like Kantian categorical oversimplification Gandhi asserts 'Truth for the Truth Sake'. In the words of John Galtung 'for Mahatma the whole process was about achievement of Self Realization, nothing less'.⁴² While Sharp is concerned with social and political freedom, Gandhi's focus and objective is search for Truth.⁴³

Johan Galtung argues for a position somewhere between the strategic and principled approaches, which recognizes the importance of both principles and cost-benefit considerations in sustainable nonviolent action.⁴⁴ George Orwell has expressed his doubt about Gandhian method under certain circumstances and conditions. He observes that, 'It is difficult to see how Gandhi's methods could be applied in a country where opponents of the regime disappear in the middle of the night and are never heard of again. Without a free press and the right of assembly, it is impossible not merely to appeal to outside opinion, but to bring a mass movement into being, or even to make your intentions known to your adversary'.⁴⁵

While summing up it will be realistic to hold that Mahatma Gandhi meted profound impact on the western society and the socio-political thinking. Despite little concern most of the scholars have the opinion that Satyagraha was not just a methodology of warfare against exploiters but it was a way of life which shuns the element of hatred, deceit, lie and other Machiavellian tactics accepted by the realist school of thought for the purpose of capturing of power. Robert Payne, in his biography of Gandhi, remarked, 'Future historians will probably regard him as one of those rare men who come at the end of historical epochs and by their very presence announce the beginning of a new dispensation, though they are not themselves permitted to see the Promised Land'.⁴⁶

A resolution recognising the contribution made by Mahatma Gandhi through non-violence to promote world peace was unanimously passed by the US House of Representatives, with American lawmakers described him as a 'man of all times and places' in February 2009. The resolution on Gandhi to recognise his 140th birth anniversary was introduced by Faleomavaega and several of his colleagues in June.

Congressman Eni Faleomavaega in his speech on the floor of the House said, 'We never forget that without Gandhi, the fates of what is now the world's largest democracy, India, and the oldest democracy, the United States, would likely be far different'. He further said, 'His legacy is seen in the over 1.5 billion people who inhabit the free and independent countries of the Indian subcontinent and by our own embrace of the principles of nonviolent political action, unity and religious

tolerance within the United States. Mahatma Gandhi served as an inspiration for a movement that ended the rule of the British Raj, created a free and independent Indian state and inspired the American civil rights movement'.⁴⁷ Republican Ros-Lehtinen said: 'Gandhi was a man of vision and action, who asked many of the most profound questions that face human kind, even though he may not have had all of the answers, he became a man for all times and all places'.

Remembering Gandhi as one of the most revered people of the last century, Congressman Ed Royce, said, 'Preaching non-violence, Gandhi dedicated his life's work to helping others. Gandhi led campaigns to ease poverty, to expand women's rights, to build religious amity and helped direct India into a new era of democracy'. Royce further said, 'Gandhi himself would indeed have been proud of how far his nation has come... We are here today to help keep the spirit of Gandhi alive and to remember his remarkable achievements'.⁴⁸

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In the quest of a new space Under the colonial rule

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Abstract

The paper basically deals with the Neo-Vaishnavite Satras of Assam with special reference to Auniati Satra. The Satra had certain amazing interactions with the colonial rulers which had initiated a new dimensions in the politics of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Assam. Since the medieval society of Assam did not earn the qualities of a full-grown feudal society of medieval Europe, obviously the nature of the interaction between the satra and state cannot be same. The Ahom system of administration was purely semi feudalistic in nature which had some interesting reflexes on the Satra and the British relation. The paper will try to know the attitude of both the British and the Satras and their inter-dependent outlook.

The paper basically deals with the Neo-Vaishnavite Satras¹ of Assam with special reference to Auniati Satra. The Satra had certain amazing interactions with the colonial rulers which had initiated a new dimensions in the politics of late nineteenth and early twentieth century Assam.

The Auniati satra is situated in Majuli.² The satra has a large campus along with all the basic structure of a neo-vaishnavite satra centering round the Namghar³ and Manikut⁴. The whole campus of the Satra is covered with four rows of Hatis⁵ in square arrangement. The Satradhikar (the head of the satra and under whose jurisdiction fall all the religious and civil management of the satra) resides just near the premises of the namghar. The Deka Satradhikar (Second in the hierarchy) whose position is always counted next to the satradhikar resides in the middle part of the north line (Uttara Hati); and Govinda Puriya (Third in the hierarchy) who was basically a trainee, resides in the middle part of the east line

(*Pub Hati*). All *Bhakats* (Vaishnava Devotees) live on the four lines of the *Satra* (East, West, North and South).⁶ The *namghar* of the Auniati *Satra* is a huge structure, the roof of which is supported on some huge wooden pillars and the great floor space is entirely bare save for one or two lecterns on which the sacred writings are reposing.

Srimanta Sankardeva was the father of Neo-Vaishnavism. After his death, rift started among the sect in regard to the headship of Neo-Vaishnavism resulting in the birth of four new sub-sects popularly known as *Samhati* / *Sanghati*⁷ viz. *Brahma Samhati*, *Purusha Samhati*, *Kala Samhati* and *Nika samhati*. Auniati *Satra* was a *satra* which belonged to the sub sect of *Brahma Samhati*. Damodardeva, who was supposed to be one of the prominent disciples of Sankardeva, began a new trend in the practice of Vaishnavism after the death of his *guru*.⁸ The trend was a compromise between the path of devotion laid by Sankardeva and the brahmanical practices already prevalent in this part. The modification attracted a number of disciples from the higher class of the society.⁹

It is to be mentioned here that till the reign of Gadadhar Singha, Ahom kingdom passed through the worst time in history. Seven kings lost their lives in the hand of the power loving Ahom ministers within eleven years (1670 – 1681).¹⁰ The Auniati *Satra* remained indifferent during this unstable period of the kingdom.¹¹ While some other *satras* like *Dakshinpat Satra*¹² when he came to power and some *Kala samhati Satras*¹³ played an interesting role in the making and unmaking of the kings during this instability of the kingdom. Hence Gadadhar Singha took stern action against the *satradhikars* of the neo-vaishnavite *Satras*. As a result some of the *Stradhikars* were killed, many were compelled to flee. Ramdev Gossain, the himself from the enmity of the Ahom king.¹⁴ But with the death of Gadadhar Singha, his son Rudra Singha ascended the throne and soon revised the policy of his father and reinstated the exiled *satradhikars* into their original positions and honoured again with royal patronization. From the later half of the eighteenth century the Ahom kingdom faced the Moamaria rebellion which had exposed the weakness of the Ahom royalty.¹⁵ The chaotic Political situation of the kingdom ultimately invited foreign interference in disguise of the Burmese and the British. The Burmese came in 1817, 1819 and 1821 and practically occupied a large part of Assam.¹⁶ On the ground of threat to the security of the British Empire in India, the British also decided to retaliate the Burmese aggression and entered Assam (1824). Finally by the Treaty of Yandaboo the Burmese handed over Assam to the British.¹⁷ It is to be noted here that, the relations between the Ahom state (the secular power) and the

satra (the religious authority) was not similar to the situation like the Church -State conflict in Europe. The medieval society of Assam neither had earned the qualities of a full-grown feudal state as it was seen in case of medieval Europe, nor the Ahom system of administration had earned the temperament of a matured feudal structure. We can see that the structure of the Ahom state was semi feudalistic in nature.¹⁸

Kusaramdev was the Auniati *Satradhikar* who witnessed the cruelties of the Burmese army and anticipated a new dimension in the history of the country for the years to come under the British rule. Just after becoming *satradhikar*, he tried to build up understandings among the *adhikaras*, especially of those *satras* which had a long legacy of receiving royal patronage. He went to Dakshinpat and Garhmur *satra*, and also met the *adhikara* of Kuruabahi *satra* and discussed about the new political developments of the country.¹⁹ Kusaramdev denied associating with the native Moamarias who plotted against the Burmese.²⁰ Not only that, he even refused to comply with the Burmese too, who later sought help from the Vaishnava-*satras* against the British.²¹ But he was claver enough to side with the British instead of the Burmese. Probably he understood that the people of the Brahmaputra valley hated the Burmese atrocities. So he tactfully disassociated himself from the Burmese and preferred to help the British to crush them.²² Thus they acted as an associate in the expansion of the British rule in this part of India from its inception.

When Commissioner David Scott was in Sibsagar due to some preoccupation, Kusaramdev Gossain met the British administrative stalwart on the bank of river Dikhou.²³ Probably this was the first event when a *Satradhikar* met a British officer and discussed about the changing political scenario of the country and tried to make out a space there. During this cordial visit Kusaramdev tried to inform Scott regarding the high position of the *satras* in the Ahom state. In this conversation he took help of a translator. Undoubtedly it was an attempt from the side of the *satradhikar* to bring the attention of the new ruler of the state in their favour. The effort remained unchanged throughout the entire British rule in India. Kusaramdev met many other important high profile British administrative officers like Neufville, Jenkins, Wade, Methi etc and tried to secure patronization from the new royals.²⁴

Kusaramdev stayed for a longer period in Guwahati than Majuli towards the later part of his *adhikarship*. Probably he realized about the change of political gravity from Upper Assam to Lower Assam. He even did not pay proper attention to the invitation of Purandar Singha, the last Ahom king, to his kingdom²⁵ and sent the *Deka Satradhikar* Dattadev Gossain instead, to keep the request of the Ahom king.²⁶

With the death of Kusaramdev, Dattadev Gossain (1838-1904) succeeded to the *adhikarship* of the Auniati *satra*. After the death of Kusaramdev, he did not leave Guwahati for next seven months. He stayed in the city and was in close touch with the British administrative officers. When he went to the main *satra* at Majuli for coronation (To take *Nirmali*), he even took permission from the commissioner Jenkins.²⁷ When Commissioner Jenkins was in Jorhat on an official visit, Dattadev Gossain immediately took the opportunity of meeting him there. He gave second preference to the declining Ahom king who himself was interested in taking the blessings of the spiritual *guru*.²⁸ There were many other examples when the *satradhikar* of the Auniati *Satra* invited the British officers, most prominent among them being Jenkins, Henry Cotton and Capt. Brudey, to enjoy *Bhaona*²⁹ organised at the main *satra* as well as in the *sakha* (branch) *satra* at Guwahati, Sibsagar and Jorhat. Every time he made special sitting arrangement for the British officials. Thus we see that Dattadev Gossain was very much inclined towards the newly established British power and tried to be a good friend of them.

One of the most important British officials who visited Auniati *satra* in 1878 was the then Chief Commissioner of Assam Colonel Keating. A grand celebration was held in his honour. He was welcomed to the main *satra* along with the concerted drums and honoured with many memoirs. Dattadev confirmed future cooperation and support from the new rulers.³⁰ Same honour was given to Sir Henry Cotton too, when he visited the Auniati *satra* in 1896-97.³¹

On 1st January 1877, a grand durbar was held at Delhi in honour of Queen Victoria. In Sibsagar district of Assam too, a replica of the durbar was organised. Rai Bahadur Ganga Gobinda Phookan, Dinanath Bezbaroa, the representatives of early Assamese middle class was the important organisers of the grand event. Deputy Commissioner Lieutenant R. Campbell himself sent the special invitation to the *satradhikars* of four *Rajsatras*.³² Not only that, even their sitting arrangement was also made at the direct intervention of the Deputy Commissioner.³³

Kamaldev Gossain (1904-1922) was also the true follower of his predecessors. In 1920, when Lord Chelmsford, the Governor General of India visited Assam, a durbar was held at Majuli in his honour. The Auniati *Satradhikar* welcomed His Majesty by presenting a beautiful Gold plated felicitation letter in an attractive small container made of gold.³⁴ In return, Chelmsford highly praised the religious leaders of Assam and acknowledged their goodwill with a promise of future mutual co-operations. A relatively long extract from his speech on the occasion is given below because this throws some light on certain aspects of the *Satra* particularly as viewed by the colonial state, 'It has been a real pleasure to me that on this, my first, visit to Assam I have been able to come to the historic Majuli and there to meet the great Vaishnavite abbots with their monks, their disciples, their tenants, and their friends. I feel

that I am now in the real heart of old Assam and I am indeed touched by the warmth of the loyal welcome which I have received. The kindly feelings which exists to-day between the British rulers and the Majuli abbots have their root in past centuries. Assam is now, and always has been, a deeply religious province.... It is difficult to exaggerate the good which has been done in the past, and which is being done to-day, by the abbots of Majuli. Their work has always been on the side of kindness, purity, toleration, loyalty, and sweet reasonableness.... From that day to this the relationship between the abbots on the one hand and the AhomKings and their British successors on the other has been of the most cordial and kindly nature. It has been the privilege and pleasure of the British rulers not only to confirm and perpetuate the grants of land, either revenue-free or at concessional rates, which were made to the abbots by the pious kings of old, but to afford special protection to the abbots and their disciples in all times of trouble and invasion. The abbots on their part have always been to the force in placing all their material resource-elephants,man-power, boats, and supplies- at the disposal of the British Government whenever frontier expeditions or other emergencies made a call upon the loyalty of its subjects. And apart from this material help the moral help of the good abbots has always been very great. They have been unswervingly on the side of law and order and quiet good citizenship.... I have been able to get away from the turmoil and to meet the abbots and their disciples in these beautiful surroundings and to assure them that the friendship of centuries still stands firm. In the future as in the past let us work together, each in our own way, forthe peace and the happiness of India...'³⁵

The next year (1921), the Chief Commissioner of Assam again visited Auniati *satra* and honoured the *satradhikar*.³⁶ In 1945 when Hemchandra Goswami was the *satradhikar* of the *Satra* Sir Andrew Gourlay Clow, the then Commissioner of Assam visited Majuli. Goswami took the opportunity of presenting a memorandum to the British commissioner where he regrets the failure to give warm reception to him (the commissioner). The *satradhikar* offered warm greetings to the British officer and prayed to god for the victory of the Allied forces in the World War.³⁷

The above description shows the fact that the Auniati *Satra* was always trying to maintain good relation with the ruling authority. It had earned the status of the *Rajsatra* during the Ahom rule and even maintained the same during the British rule. It felt threatened when its position was changed in the royal durbar held at Sibsagar to honour the Queen and to counter it immediately placed a demand to maintain status quo with which the British also urgently complied. Basically the British were not interested in interfering in the *satra* affairs. All *satra* matters were decided within the *satra* as before. The British had seen some great followers in

disguise of the *satradhikars* and began to realize the importance of the *satras* in the Assamese social network. They saw in the *satras* a possible support base of the British rule if they were not antagonized but nurtured well. So the chief commissioners and other British officials, like the Ahom kings and officials of the seventeenth and eighteenth century paid ritualistic visits to the major *satras*, and treated the Gossains of the *satra* with great respect and honour. In return the *Satradhikars* also looked upon the British rulers as they had done on the Ahom kings and gave the British chief commissioners royal treatment when they went to the *satras*. Thus by maintaining cordial relation with the Government, the *satras* retain their earlier wealth and power even during the British period.³⁸

Here it is to be noted that more or less all the *satradhikars* had a good relation with the rulers who were Christians, but they never took the Christian missionaries into their confidence. At the early stage the British also, did not encourage the Christian missionaries to work in the Indian field for many strategic reasons. Probably the company comprehended that, ‘... in the matter of religion the natives of India were peculiarly sensitive. Evidence on this point, taken by a committee of the Commons so far back as 1781, had elicited the unanimous opinion that “any interference with the religion of the natives would eventually insure the total destruction of the British power”. On no account should missionaries be employed or maintained by the government. They might go to India as they had gone here to fore or under new restrictions; they might preach, translate and teach at their own risk; but no sanction should be given by government to their proceedings, and no attempt should be made to tie the hands of government from restraining their activities’.³⁹

But the company’s authority was compelled to bow down in front of the severe pressure of the missionary organizations in the home country and finally permitted the evangelists to promote Christianity in India. The charter Act 1813 allowed the advent of the English and the American missionaries to India. Eventually Assam was also brought under their target area and Nathan Brown and Oliver T. Cutter reached Sadiya on 23rd March 1836.⁴⁰ They were greatly helped by Francis Jenkins who was the Agent to the Governor General, North East Frontier in establishing a mission in Assam.⁴¹ Initially the missionaries were not much successful. William Robinson, a missionary lamented in 1834, ‘There are no sign of any good here, when I consider for how many years brother Rae had laboured among these people in vain, my spirit began to drop within me, and fear all my labour will prove same’.⁴² But the missionaries were determined to reach their goal. Nathan Brown himself made a special personal appeal to the churches at home where he wrote ‘Should we be to the extremity be recalled The call to RETURN is one of which we could never obey, so long as life and a moderate share of health is granted to us. No, the precious converts that are gathered on, and

to be gathered from amongst the people are dearer to me than life and with them by god's grace will I remain to last'.⁴³ This determination obviously led to competition with the existing religious forces and specially the Hindu religious organizations and principally the Neo Vaishnavite *satras*. As the mission first started its work in Upper Assam, the *satras* of this upper valley became sensitive. The most important role was played by the Auniati *Satra*. Probably the *satradhikars* understood that their prosperity in the last few centuries were mostly because of the uninterrupted loyalty to the ruling powers. The same may happen in the case of Christianity sooner or later. A ruling Christian government might have offered their support to the Christian missionary organizations. So the Auniati *Satra* determined to resist the advent of Christianity in the land. The result was a cold war between the two missionary organizations. As a part of their missionary agenda the Christian missionaries started establishing schools to educate the people, publishing religious pamphlets and newspapers like *Orunodoi* and *Dipti*, giving medical help to the people and declared revolt against the social evils like opium etc.⁴⁴ But, they received strong opposition from the Neo Vaishnavite *satras*, especially from Auniati *Satra*. It was the Auniati *Satra* which took the lead to educate the people against the hidden agenda of the Christian missionaries and initiated a parallel organizational work in defense like publication of news paper viz. *Assam Bilasini* in 1872.

The *Assam Bilasini* was supposed to be the first Assamese news paper published by a native of Assam. Undoubtedly *Assam Bilasini* was the first Vaishnava reaction in print to *Orunodoi* of the Christian missionary. It was 'a silent counter challenge against the propagation of Christianity by the missionaries through their organ the *Orunodoi*'.⁴⁵ The paper was edited by Sri Sridharchandra Barua Oja, a devout Vaishnava *bhakat* of Auniati *satra* and a very loyal personality of Dattadev Goswami.⁴⁶ Sri Sridharchandra Barua Oja also earned his repute for his work *Dattadev Charit*, a biography of his own *guru*.

Thus *Assam Bilasini* was a competitive and offensive venture of a Vaishnava *satradhikar* who had no institutional English education. This pioneering effort opened the path for the future generation too. As a result within a very short time Assam saw few more magazines of religious nature to defend Hinduism from the Christian propaganda. At the close of *Assam Bilasini*, Auniati *Satra* of Majuli started to publish an Assamese monthly *Assam Dipok* and *Assam Tara* under the editorship of Sridhar Barua. In the year 1875-76, two more papers, one dealt with science and literature and the other was of a religious nature. Both were edited by natives of Nowgong and printed at Calcutta. But the publishers were not known.⁴⁷ In the year 1876 Sri Binanda Chandra Goswami, the *satradhikar* of Dihingia *Satra*

at Raha in Nowgong district, published a monthly magazine of religious subjects which was circulated among his followers.⁴⁸ The name of the paper was *Chandroday* and it was edited by Khireswar Barua and printed at Chidananda Press at Guwahati. Then again *Asom Pradipika* a monthly journal was published in 1920 under the patronage of Naradev Goswami, the *satradhikar* of Dakshinpat *Satra*.

Apart from this the Christian missionaries took initiative in establishing schools also, as a means of their religious agenda. The new British authorities, no doubt, adopted encouraging steps in establishing schools in Assam but without a clear education policy. David Scott initiated the process by setting up eleven schools in 1826. Subsequently the numbers of schools were increased to twenty two and lessons were imparted through Bengali covering elements of reading, writing and arithmetic.⁴⁹ Emphasis was laid on the study of English. It was however found extremely difficult on the part of the beginners to learn English both as a subject and language of instruction. Consequently enrolment was very poor and many students did not turn up after admission.⁵⁰ Thus the British imposed not only a new administrative mechanism but also an alien education system with two foreign languages (English and Bengali). Sanskrit and Assamese, two common and familiar languages of the people were not given priority in the new education system. So people preferred the *satrasal/ Chatrasal* system where education was given through Sanskrit Hindu Scriptures and native Assamese Scriptures in a way popularly called as *Guru-Sisya Parampara*. The *Satradhikar* of Auniati *Satra* realized the problems at this juncture. He understood that it was impossible for the *bhakats* of the *Satra* to go to the schools where education was imparted through an alien system in alien language by alien teacher. He couldn't allow his disciples to go through the Christian gospel and their scriptures too. So he decided to initiate the traditional Sanskrit learning system within the *Satra* campus. He brought Dhireswar Acharya, a Sanskrit scholar from Kamrup and placed him in the *Satra* to train the disciples of the *Satra* on the Vedic language. Dattadev was very conscious of the glory of the Sanskrit learning of the *Satra* and wanted to pass it to the new generation *satriya*. For that the needed infra structure was built up within the campus of the *Satra* where Dhireswaracharya not only gave education to the *Satra* people but also created *Brittamanjuri* and *Karnabhuk*, two legendary work in Sanskrit language.⁵¹ The process was continued even during the time of his successor Kamaldev Goswami. He upgraded the existing system to a full-fledged *satrasal* and Dhireswaracharya was appointed as *Mahamahopadhyaya* of the same institution.⁵² In the mean time the British education policy also got its desired pace. The system earned the respects of the general population. Kamaldev Gossain realized the tune of changing situation immediately responded by establishing a high school there and the people honoured

him by naming it as Kamaldev Institution which was later on, popularly known as 'Auniati Kamaldev High School'. This was the first time in the history of the *Satra* that a *satradhikar* took initiative in spending money from the *satra* treasury for establishing an English high school.⁵³ The institution is still there, standing as a witness of many historical events of the valley.

Similar action was seen from the other *satras* also. We have already discussed that the Auniati *satradhikars* treated the British high officers like the Ahom kings and immediately recognized the British Government as their overlord. Initially they hesitated to comply with the British education policy but afterwards they became the exponents of western education and established schools in English model. There were some other *satras* whose scion of the *adhikar* family or the ardent disciples of the *satra* not only accepted British suzerainty but also acquired western education and hold good jobs in British government or worked hand in hand with the British officials. We may name Ratneswar Mahanta (1864-93) of Baliagaru *Satra* who worked as Accountant in Nowgong Kachari and Hem Chandra Goswami (1872-1928) of Gouranga *Satra* who worked as Sub Deputy Collector and later promoted to Extra Assistant Commissioner under the British Government. Both had started their educational career from their own *satra* and later got English education.⁵⁴ Name also may be taken of Mitradev Mahanta (1894-1982), the *satradhikar* of Letugram *Satra* of Jorhat who later became the president of Asom Sahitya Sabha.⁵⁵ Dinanath Bezbaroa (1813-1895), Harakanta Barua Sadaramin (1813-1900), Madhab Chandra Bardoloi and Padma Nath Gohain Barua, who earned enormous respects in the contemporary society were disciples of either Kamalabari or Auniati *Satra* respectively.

The above discussion shows the fact that because of the social position acquired by the Auniati *satra* and its *satradhikars*, It had played a crucial role in the contemporary society. The British also found a loyal companion and used their wealth and pomp for expanding their imperial administration. While the Ahoms were losing their power, the Auniati *Satra* immediately shifted their loyalty towards the new ruler *i.e.* British. The *satra* did not hesitate to accommodate new changes although some of the feudal norms and ideas which they had earned under the Ahom system worked throughout the British rule and few of them are still continuing. These accommodations, no doubt, had some impact on the growth and development of Assam in the near future. But there were certain *Satras* which had a different attitude towards the British administration. Garhmur *satra* was one among them which had left an indelible mark on the socio-political history of Assam especially in the twentieth century. The *satra* under the *adhikarship* of Pitambardev Goswami

had brought tremendous changes to the *satra* movement and set a field with a revolutionary purpose.

Notes and References

¹As a part of the Vaishnavite movement, there evolved a new socio-religious institution in Assam known as *Satra*, which began to serve not only as the instrument of spreading the faith but also helped to sustain and stabilize Vaishnavism by making it a part and parcel of Assamese social life.

²A river Island of Brahmaputra which can be considered as the religious hub of Vaishanava faith in Assam, and presently a subdivision of the district of Jorhat.

³A Neo-Vishnavite prayer hall conceptualized by Srimanta Sankardeva and his successor Madhavadeva.

⁴Garvagriha or sanctum cella with a religious throne specially made of *Sankari* style.

⁵Rows of small cottages surrounding the Satras, specially made for the residential stay of the inmates of the *satra*.

⁶[www. Auniati.org/about-auniati](http://www.Auniati.org/about-auniati).

⁷The term *samhati* is a synonym of the term *sangha* which means an association. The term is also used as a *samhati* (cohesion, joining). The term has been in vogue at least from the eighteenth century, if not earlier, as Chakrapani Vairagi in *Katha guru Charita* as well as Govinda Dasa in *Santa Samprada* (D.H.A.S.) refers to the term *Samhati* to mean the four Vaishnava sub-sect. Both the scripture are known to be the works of eighteenth century.

⁸Regarding the guru of Damodardeva, historians are not unanimous. Damodardeva's biographer Nilakantha Dasa in S.C. Goswami (ed), *Damodardeva-Charita*, Asom Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1927, pp. 71, 87 asserted Damodardeva as the disciple of Sankardeva while Ramaraya Dvija in *Gurulila*, S.C. Goswami, (ed.), Kamrup, Patbausi, 1947 (1869 sak), pp. 42-43. considered that he was initiated by Chaityanyadeva, the saint of Bengal during his sojourn to Kamarupa. According to Ramananda Dvija in *Vangshigopaldevar Charitra*, M. Neog, (ed), Gauhati, 1951, verses-151-153, Damodardeva was initiated into mystery of the *Bhakti* cult by one Vasudeva Vipra of Orissa.

⁹A. Roychoudhury, *Asomar Samaj Itihasot Nava Vaishnavbad*, Puberun Prakash, Guwahati, 2000, p.102.

¹⁰Lakshmi Devi, *Asom Desor Buranji*, Lawyers Book Stall, Guwahati, 1984, pp. 271-277. (The kings who were killed : Udyaditya Singha 1670-73, Ramadvaj Singha 1673-75, Suhung Raja 1675, Gobar Raja 1675, Sujinpha 1675-77, Sudoipha 1677-79, Sulikpha 1679-81).

¹¹T. Sarma*, *Auniati Satrar Buranji*, Auniati Satra, Majuli, 2004. p. 97.

¹²Surya Kumar Bhuyan(ed), *Tungkhungia Buranji*, DHAS, Ched-49.

- ¹³*ibid*, Ched-3. (*Tirthanath Sarma, a member of a devout Vaishnavite family, and a loyal disciple of Auniati Satra was an erudite scholar of Assamese Literature. His literary excellence has earned repute for which he became the President of *Asom Sahitya Sabha* in 1971 session held at Makum. He maintained good personal relation with the satradhikars of Auniati Satra and the satradhikars also visited his (Sarma's) residence several times. The book was also written on personal request of the *Satradhikar* of Auniati Satra and so becomes important for our understanding of various aspects of the Auniati Satra).
- ¹⁴M.C.B. Rajmedhi, *Auniati Satrar Guru –charitmala*, Somnath Bora, Jorhat, 2004. p. 13. (*Madhab Chandra Bora is holding the post of *Rajmedhi* and *Bayan* in the Auniati Satra, Majuli. As an integral member of the *satra* his literary works deserves importance in our study.)
- ¹⁵The Moamaria rebellion was a popular social and political revolt that had shook the Ahom royalty towards the latter part of the eighteenth century. The revolt was principally led by the disciples of the Moamara *satra*. Moamara was a *satra* belonged to the Kala Samhati which was propounded by Gopaldev, a pioneer preacher of Neo Vaishnavism in Assam. The revolt started against the atrocities of the royal officials over the Moamarias.
- ¹⁶E.A. Gait, *The History of Assam*, Lawyer's Book Stall, Guwahati, 1990, pp..225-232.
- ¹⁷*ibid.*, pp.280-289.
- ¹⁸A. Guha, 'Tribalism to Feudalism in Assam: 1600-1750', *The Indian Historical Review*, Vol, I, No. 4, March 1974, pp. 65-76.
- ¹⁹T. Sarma, *op.cit.*, p. 151.
- ²⁰*ibid.*, p. 154.
- ²¹N. Das, *Kushadev Charit*, Manuscript, verses: 476-478, *ibid.*, pp 156-7.
- ²²M.C.B. Rajmedhi, *op.cit.*, p.52.
- ²³N. Das, *op.cit*, verse: 601; T. Sarma, *op.cit.*, p 158.
- ²⁴N. Das, *ibid*, verses:747,753, T. Sarma, *ibid.*, p 158-9.
- ²⁵A kingdom which was given by the British to Purandar Singha, on condition of paying an amount of Rs 50000/ as yearly tribute. The kingdom comprised of the area of the earlier province i.e. east of river Dhansiri, E.A. Gait, *op.cit.*, 1990, pp. 297-98.
- ²⁶S.C. Barua Oja, *Sri Dattadev Charit*, N. Saikia(ed), Bani Mandir, Guwahati, 2004, p.44, T. Sarma, *op.cit.*, 2004, p. 160.
- ²⁷T. Sarma, *op.cit.*, 2004, p. 165.
- ²⁸S.C. Barua Oja, *op.cit.*, 2004, p.111-115; T. Sarma. *op.cit.*, 2004, p. 166.
- ²⁹*Bhaona* is a kind of theatre performed in the *satra*. The dramas were written in Assamese or Brajabuli language by the *satradhikars* or the *satra* officials. Only the male people could take part in the performance while the females were not allowed. The actors used mukha or mask made in the *satra* itself at the time of performance.

- ³⁰S.C.Barua Ojha, *op.cit.*, 2004, pp. 204-05.
- ³¹*ibid.*, pp. 288-90.
- ³²*ibid.*, p. 200.
- ³³*ibid.*, p. 200; Specially four Brahma Samhati *Satras* i.e. Auniati, Dakshinpat, Garhmur, and Kuruabahi earned special privilege in the Ahom court. The *satradhikars* of these *satras* were the special invitees of the Ahom kings in festive occasions. They were known as *Raj Satra* which meant *satras* of the Raja (king). Their sitting arrangement in the court was like this- 1st - Auniati, 2nd -Garhmur, 3rd -Daksinpat and the 4th -Kuruabahi. Kesabananda Dev Goswami, *Sattra Samskritir Ruprekha*, National Library, Dibrugarh, 1994, p.3.
- ³⁴F. V. Chelmsford, *Speeches by Lord Chelmsford*, Government Monotype Press, Simla, 1921, pp. 504-506, T. Sarma, *op.cit.*, 2004, p 202; G. Hazarika, *Sri Srimat Dharmacharya Pitambardev*, Titabar,1973, p.117.
- ³⁵F. V. Chelmsford, *ibid.*, pp. 504-506.
- ³⁶T. Sarma, *op.cit.*, 2004, p 204.
- ³⁷See Appendix- E of R. S. Mazumdar, *Religious Institutions and Social Development in Assam 1826 - 1952: A Study of the Satras*, Unpublished Thesis, NEHU, Shillong.
- ³⁸M. Sharma, *Social and Economic Change in Assam: Middle Class Hegemony*, Ajanta Publications, Delhi, 1990, p 127.
- ³⁹H.H. Dodwell, *Cambridge Modern History*, Vol. VI, Cambridge University Press, London, 1932, p. 124.
- ⁴⁰H.K. Barpujari, *The American Missionaries and North Eastern India(1836-1900)*, Spectrum Publications, Guwahati, 1986, Introduction, p. xv.
- ⁴¹Francis Jenkins thought that pacification of the Khamtis and the Singphos who were disturbing the tranquility of the frontier, could be effectively done by the spread of the gospel.
- ⁴²*Serampur Periodical Accounts*, 1834.
- ⁴³E. W. Brown, *The whole world Kin: Experience Among Remote Tribes and Other Labors of Nathan Brown*, Hubbard Brothers, Philadelphia, 1890, p. 269-71.
- ⁴⁴For details see, H.K. Barpujari, *op.cit.*, 1986.
- ⁴⁵N. Saikia, *Background of Modern Assamese Literature*, Omsons Publications, New Delhi, 1988, p.235.
- ⁴⁶D. Chaliha, *The Origin and Growth of Assamese language and its Literature*, Asom Sahitya Sabha, Jorhat, 1949, p. 473.
- ⁴⁷E.A. Gait, *Report on the progress of historical Research in Assam*, Shillong, 1897.
- ⁴⁸*Report on the Administration of the Province of Assam for the year 1876-77*, Shillong, 1878, p. 155.
- ⁴⁹*Report on the Public Instruction in Bengal*, 1838, pp.71-72, 1839, pp.68-69, 1841, pp.180-181.
- ⁵⁰H.K. Barpujari, *Political History of Assam*, Vol I, Govt. of Assam, 1977, p. 109.
- ⁵¹T. Sarma, *op.cit.*, 2004, pp. 86, 191.

⁵²*ibid.*, pp. 86, 191.

⁵³*ibid.*, p.205. Also see Appendix-D.

⁵⁴The information is collected from D.Neog, *Asomiya Sahityar Buranji*, Xuwani Prakash, Guwahati, 1993, p.320 and S.N. Sarma, *Hemchandra Goswami*, Sahtya Akademi, 1994. Baliagaru *satra* was situated in North Lakhimpur and Gouranga *Satra* was originally located in Majuli which was later shifted to Dhekialgaon . Both the *satra* was affiliated to Auniati *Satra*.

⁵⁵B.C. Das, *Byakti Parichay*, Smriti Sangrakshan Pratisthan, Barpeta, 1979, p.32.

Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale's 'Re-interpretation' of Sikh History in Speeches

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Abstract

In the later decades of the twentieth century, the Khalistan movement caused severe damage to the Indian state in general and the Punjabi society in particular. Radical mobilization of Sikhs by Bhindranwale led to the emergence of a militant movement. As far as an academic analysis of the movement's advent is concerned, academicians have focused on social, economic, and political factors along with religious communalization. Significance of the re-interpretation of the Sikh history by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale (the prime leader of the movement till his death in June 1984) and Khalistani leaders and writers has not been taken into account. This paper tries to analyse the reinterpretation and manipulation of Sikh history by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In this context, this paper deals with one major question: What is the difference between the interpretation of Sikh history by the Khalistani accounts and the mainstream Sikh history? The Government and Indian society have declared the movement as a militant movement. Narratives of this movement directly or indirectly support the independence of the Punjab (demand for Khalistan) state from the Indian federation. Demand for Khalistan is a direct threat to the Indian State in its ability to govern the Punjab. Paradoxically, even after the end of the militant movement, these narratives are in circulation through various channels such as audio-visual clips, books, calendars, pamphlets, stickers etc. The paper also tries to suggest that the possibility of revival of the Khalistan movement can be based on timely production and circulation of these accounts. However, to estimate the production and circulation of these account is moreover a challenging exercise and requires different tools of investigation. This study proposes further research to investigate these accounts in terms of acceptability of perspectives and arguments in the contemporary Punjabi society.

Introduction

India became independent in 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India extensively focused on secular history. Any history that seemed to divide the society on communal lines was contested and discarded. Secular-nationalist histories were promoted to create a collective national consciousness. The objective of such history writings was to consolidate nationalism and establish communal harmony among various communities. The Nehruvian tradition of history writing still continues in school textbooks and in a large part of university history writing. However, the contestation of the secular-nationalist history writing came both in official and popular space. Official contestation came when Hindu nationalists founded their government in the late 1970s, and from 1999 to 2004. In the popular space, contestation to secular historical writings continued in various parts of India because the communal divide has been a matter of discussion in the private community meetings.

In the case of Punjab, separatist movement of 1980s and 1990s introduced a new version of historical discourse, based on the sharp communal divide between Sikhs and Hindus. Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, the prime leader of that armed struggle, introduced a new version of Sikh history that contested the notion of Hindus being an opponent community. The discourse is in circulation in the form of stickers, calendars, posters, booklets, and books. In the light of this perspective, the present paper discusses that discourse and tries to analyse how that discourse is different than the mainstream Sikh history and nationalist history. For this purpose, this paper discusses Bhindranwale's speeches.

A Brief Note on Demand for Khalistan Movement

Demand for Khalistan emerged in the 1940s in contestation to the demand of Pakistan. After the emergence of the demand of Pakistan, Sikhs imagined that if there would be partition Hindus would dominate in India and Muslims will rule in Pakistan. Such partition appeared to Sikhs as a loss of their homeland. Sikh felt vulnerable and a section of the Sikh community demanded Khalistan as their homeland. However, their demand never brought desired results, and it was discarded by colonial masters and as well as by the Indian nationalist leaders. But a section of the Sikh community never gave up the demand. During the Partition, both Indian nationalist leaders and Pakistani supporters tried to attract Sikhs and negotiated to become part of their country. At the time of Partition, Sikhs decided to go with India and after Partition settled down largely in east Punjab.

launched Punjabi Suba movement in the 1950s and 1960s. The movement resulted in very large mass mobilization. Thousands of people were arrested in peaceful protests. In 1955, more than 12,000 people went to jail in support of the movement. This number enlarged in 1960–61 and more than 26,000 people were arrested. But their demand for a Sikh homeland was discarded by the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Their demand was further accepted by Prime Minister Mrs. Indira Gandhi in 1966. Punjab was divided into three parts, Punjab, Haryana, and Himachal Pradesh. The newly constructed Punjab became a Punjabi-speaking Sikh dominated state. Even after having a separate Sikh-dominated state, a section of the Sikh community continued the discussion over a separate Sikh State. After the emergence of Bhindranwale as a prominent leader among Sikhs, the question over demand of Khalistan did catch attention of masses. After the 1984, many militant organisation emerged with the goal to establish Khalistan in Punjab by separating it from Indian federation. In this light it is important to understand narrative around the idea of Khalistan.

What is the mainstream Sikh history?

Before starting the discussion over reinterpretation of Sikh history in Khalistani narratives, it is important to understand what mainstream Sikh history is. Mainstream Sikh history starts from the birth of Guru Nanak Dev, the first human Sikh Guru, in 1469 AD. It covers the life history of all ten Gurus from the first to the last. There are ten human Gurus in the Sikh religion. The last one was Guru Gobind Singh who died in 1708 AD. There is special emphasis on the shifting nature of the Sikh religion from a peaceful, non-violent religion to the arm-bearing religion for its protection. While discussing the shifting nature, the mainstream Sikh religion discusses oppressive nature of Mughal court and Mughal administrators and martyrdom of fifth and ninth Guru, Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur, respectively. Mainstream Sikh religion argues that Sikhs took arms to protect their religion and identity and not to offend or oppress anyone. This argument is commonly acceptable in the Indian society in general and in the Sikh society in particular. The mainstream Sikh narratives also elaborate on the eighteenth-century struggle of Sikhs against oppressive rulers and invaders such as Nadir Shah and Ahmed Shah Abdali. While discussing the brutalities of invaders, mainstream Sikh narratives emphasis the struggling nature of the Sikh community. According to such narratives, Sikhs believe in martyrdom rather than compromising with their religious identity. The

next phase in the mainstream Sikh narratives is the emergence of twelve Sikh missals and establishment of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's empire. These narratives consider his reign as the period of the real Khalsa raj. Generally, mainstream Sikh historical narratives finish their writing with the downfall of Maharaja Ranjeet Singh's empire in 1849 AD. The downfall of Ranjeet Singh's empire is a painful episode in these narratives.

These narratives do not talk anything against the Hindu community or any personality from the community. They generally represent a severe critique of Muslim rulers and invaders. Many a time they also target Muslims but the target is slightly hidden in the language and the argument.

Such narratives are available in almost every form from popular sphere to the academic sphere. In the popular sphere, bards especially Dhadhis and Kavishar, spread such narratives among masses.¹ In the academic sphere, many historians such as Ganda Singh, Fauza Singh, Khushwant Singh, and Jagtar Singh Grewal have written extensively by applying a similar structure. Khushwant Singh's work *A History of Sikhs* in two volumes has been equally popular among English readers. Many academicians also used this work as a reference book. The structure of arguments of these narratives generally did not change. Basically, these narratives never misrepresented the Hindu community.

In the popular imagination too, Sikhs and Hindus never appeared as divided communities. Hindus have been regular visitors of Gurudwaras and a section of Sikh community has also been visiting Hindu temples. Usage of Hindu gods and goddesses by Sikh Gurus as divine characters and symbol of power appeared a number of times in their Gurbani. Hindus and Sikhs lived integrated for centuries. Culturally and personally, they have been celebrating each other's festivals, visiting each other's marriages, and helping each other in difficult situations as a matter of daily life. Infact, both communities joined hand at the time of Partition riots against Muslims. Vice-a-versa, both communities faced casualties at the hands of Muslims in the same incident.

Bhindranwale, Militant Movement and Changing Discourse of Sikh History

When Bhindranwale came into limelight, most of the Khalistani supporters joined his group or supported his ideology. Bhindranwale provided a strong ideological base to the Khalistan movement. Before Bhindranwale, Khalistani supporters generally accused the Hindu community politically, but mainstream historical discourse was not disturbed. Bhindranwale introduced a new discourse in which he represented Hindus as enemy of the Sikhs. To strengthen his perspective, he used examples from history, hymns of the Gurbani, and contemporary political

issues. He attempted to manipulate historical figures and historical incidents to strengthen his argument that Hindus have been enemies of the Sikhs historically.

Bhindranwale being a political leader was aware of his contemporary situations. The perspective that he had adopted only could follow a violent struggle. To generate massive violent struggle it was necessary to have mass support. The requirement of his objective led him to convince the masses for violent action. However, his preaching contained community sentiments and community demands. He combined all those with historical knowledge. The historical discourse that Bhindranwale used had special emphasis on martyrdom and sacrifice. He specially focused on the martyrdom of fifth Guru Arjun Dev and Guru Tegh Bahadur. For the martial tradition, he focused on the sixth and tenth Gurus, Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh.

Bhindranwale often asked congregations to bear modern weapons such as pistol, grenades, and other kinds of firearms. He himself used to carry a pistol along with sword and a dagger as traditional Sikh symbols. He consistently appealed to his followers to have one motorbike, three young people, and one revolver per village. His messages were full of historical justifications. When people said that the government does not allow use of weapons without a license, Bhindranwale used to say that Sikhs, the sons of Gurus do not need any license. Bhindranwale consistently emphasized that Sikhs are a peaceful community but not that peaceful that they do not know how to use weapons. He in a very rhetorical way suggested the use of weapons when required. To lead to the necessity of violence he used Bhagat Singh as a figure.

Bhindranwale situated that knowledge in such a context as to widen the gap between Hindu and Sikh communities. He used to condemn Hindus for inequality, cowardice, and not keeping their hair intact. He contrasted this picture with Sikhs, who according to him, were brave, kept their hair intact and believed in equality. Similarly, he also targeted Hindu Gods and showed them in poor light compared to Sikh Gurus. His rhetoric used examples from life and deeds of Sikh Gurus to put across his message. His sound knowledge of Sikhism enabled him to draw on the teachings of Gurus to build his arguments.

Sikhs as Victims in History

Bhindranwale told Sikhs that they are discriminated against by Hindus. He drew examples from history where Sikhs had saved the lives and honour of daughters and sisters of Hindus. He did so to contrast the good-natured Sikhs with bad Hindus, who, according to the instances he quoted, dishonoured the daughters and sisters of Sikh community on several occasions. Likewise, he gave examples of hijacking of airplanes by Hindus to show their dominance. Bhindranwale cited two examples

related to the plane hijack. For the first, he referred to the highjack of a plane by Pande brothers in relation to the release of Mrs Indira Gandhi.² And the second example was related to the hijack by two Sikhs named Satnam Singh and Gajinder Pal Singh.³ According to Bhindranwale, those who hijacked plane for Indira Gandhi got several facilities including houses in Delhi, but two Sikhs who hijacked for the protection of religion are detained in jail.⁴ Bhindranwale concluded that this as the symbol of slavery.⁵

Violence and Peace: Example of Bhagat Singh

Bhagat Singh is a well-known figure in the history of India's freedom struggle. Public perception of Bhagat Singh is that he had fought for the freedom against colonial state, selflessly. Interaction with the people of Punjab suggests that they feel a special attachment to Bhagat Singh, as they believe that he was a Punjabi Sikh. They claim Bhagat Singh as a true Sikh (*Sachcha Sikh*), their very own.⁶ The revolutionary personality of Bhagat Singh has largely contributed to the public reverence of his figure. Bhindranwale used Bhagat Singh's example to provoke people to bearing arms. He said, 'we have listened to the wordings of the *Paranpattar*'.⁷ 'We swear to oblige the *Paranpatter* and will follow the same. Many young people heard the term *shantimai* (peaceful, non-violent)'.⁸ 'They must be thinking how long they have to oblige with this term. The protocol of *Panth* is to be peaceful and we have to follow it. The example of Bhagat Singh had been given in this context. Bhagat Singh had followed the path of peacefulness. But when there was no path to keep peacefulness, he took a different path to give rights to his brothers, according to the protocol of the *Gurmat*, according to the teachings of master of *Miri-Piri*. We are not permitted to commit violence. But we are not obliged to remain peaceful if our sisters or mothers are harmed. There is no order to remain on the path of peacefulness in such circumstances'..⁹

Bhindranwale utilized the narrative of Bhagat Singh to legitimize his larger agenda of violent struggle. The image of Bhagat Singh as Sikh was part of public consciousness, which Bhindranwale steered toward his ambitions. The propaganda was a larger comprehensive message and an appeal so that people following Bhindranwale would endorse the narrative of oppression by Hindus and relate to the cause of Khalistan movement. However, apart from this consciousness-raising, what was required was a roadmap to attain this goal. This required militarizing existing ways of life of Sikhs and investing symbols with new meaning. Bhindranwale's propaganda went ahead in this direction.

Symbols: Kesh and Kirpan

Religious symbols play a big role in communalizing the mindset of people.¹⁰ Out of five, two religious symbols of Sikhism became the centre of discussion in Bhindranwale's speeches. To consolidate the Sikh identity Bhindranwale focused on symbols of Sikh religion. There are five religious symbols in Sikhism.¹¹ Bhindranwale prominently focused on only two symbols: uncut hair and bearing

arms. Bhindranwale propagated that uncut hair (*Shabad Surat*) and bearing arms were essential for becoming a Khalsa Sikh. Uncut hair was associated with masculinity. He urged Sikhs not to cut their hair and expressed contempt for Hindus who do it. He referred to Sikh Gurus and Hindu Gods to illustrate the importance of keeping hair and the loss of culture and identity that came with the loss of hair.

In one of his speeches, he told a story of Hindu God Krishna and criticized him for cutting the hair of Rukman (brother-in-law of God Krishna in *Mahabharata*).¹² Bhindranwale argued, '... they (Hindu) have never doubted or criticized Krishna Ji. They never say that their *Bhagwan* (God) put them on the wrong path. They say that even though they have to destroy this gift from God, whatever their Guide has done is right'.¹³ After criticizing Hindus for not keeping their hair intact and God Krishna for starting the 'wrong tradition' of cutting hair, he motivated Sikhs to keep their hair intact. 'If you love the *Panth*' said Bhindranwale to the congregation, 'if we are Sikhs of Sri Guru Granth Sahib and not of some holy man of other person, if we like the complete appearance, if we love our Faith and the *Panth* ...you will not cut your hair and beards'.¹⁴ Further, he emphasized the significance of intact hair and said, 'But if you are not prepared to keep your hair and beards, tell me how will you get the Khalsa to rule?'¹⁵

Bearing Weapons: Historical Justification to Armaments of Khalistan Movement

During the Khalistan movement, Bhindranwale appealed to Sikhs to bear arms. Bearing *Kirpan* is one of the five symbols in Sikhism. Bhindranwale not only emphasized bearing *Kirpan* but also emphasized bearing pistol, grenades, and other kinds of fire arms. He vehemently insisted on using those weapons for the protection of Sikhism or Sikhs. He usually began his speeches with issues like length of *Kirpan*, atrocities on Sikhs by Hindus and Hindu Government, or some issues of 'honour' of the Sikh community and would move on to the issue of bearing firearms. He blamed Hindus for harming Sikh girls and urged Sikhs to protect daughters and sisters by violent means against Hindus, if needed. He also raised the alarm that Sikh religion and Gurudwaras were under threat. He advised that it is necessary for Sikhs to bear arms.¹⁶ He himself kept traditional weapons of Sikhism and firearms. His appearance on photos shows him bearing a steel arrow, a gun and a chain of bullets. K. P. S. Gill explains the sense of projection of this image, 'With breath-taking audacity he adopted the practice of carrying, at all time, a steel arrow in his hand, imitating the Tenth Guru; rumours were set afloat that the *baaz*, the holy falcon, another symbol associated with Guru Gobind Singh, was sighted hovering protectively over him. It was whispered that the 'spirit' of the Tenth Guru had descended upon Bhindranwale; that he was an incarnation; even, among the more reckless, the blasphemous claim that he was the 'Eleventh Guru' of Sikhism'.¹⁷

Bhindranwale, in his speeches, frequently appealed to his congregation to have one motorcycle with three men and one revolvers in each village.¹⁸ He justified his stand, for bearing firearms, by giving rhetorical examples from Sikh history. He gave the example of Guru Hargobind Singh and Guru Gobind Singh, keeping in mind the significance of their place in Sikh history in terms of the militarization of Sikh community. To defeat the idea of banning the use of firearms by masses, he asserted the example of Guru Hargobind Singh,

‘After the sacrifice, the Master of *Miri* and *Piri* wore two *kirpaans*. What was the restriction at that time? Wasn’t this the restriction imposed by Jehangir that a Sikh could not own and carry weapons; that a Sikh could not ride a horse; that a Sikh could not wear a turban; ... that a Sikh could not fly a flag; that a Sikh could not maintain troops? Jehangir had put all these chains around the Sikhs’ necks. The nation was in chains ... To break these chains, the Master of *Miri* and *Piri*, the Destroyer of all Foes, the Brave Guru, the Great Warrior, The Great Benefactor, at the age of eleven years resolved and at that time declared: ‘May (the punishment for) all the sins and crimes that are the lot of evildoers, adulterers, betrayers, traitors, liars, robbers, thieves and cheats be my lot if I do not exact retribution for my father, Guru Arjan Sahib, and put a rope through Chandu’s¹⁹ nose’.²⁰

While giving the example of Hargobind, he attempted to justify the use of weapons. He argued that if Guru Hargobind had asked Sikhs to bear arms for their own protection then why they could not bear arms now. By foregrounding this example, Bhindranwale shifted the spotlight from the spiritual content of the Sikh Gurus to their martial activities. He prescribed verbatim the prescription of Guru Hargobind of followers of bearing two swords, *Miri* and *Piri*.²¹

After establishing the moral and religious justification of bearing arms, Bhindranwale extrapolated history in order to engage with the contemporary ban on arms bearing under the Indian government. Bhindranwale pleaded with the Sikhs to break down the restriction imposed by Indian Government. He emphasized the ‘natural’ and religious rights of Sikhs to bear arms and to use them. He moved a step ahead than the Gurus in using arms; from swords to the firearms. He pleaded that there is no sin for Sikhs to carry weapons.²² When someone asked him that they do not get license for bearing such weapons, he placed the Gurus history and stated, ...how many licenses did Guru Hargobind Sahib, the True King, get from Jehangir? How many licenses did Guru Gobind Singh Sahib Ji, The Tenth King, our Father, get from Aurangzeb? If the Guru did not get licenses, then, if a son is not like his father, what do people say about him? If we are Sikhs of Tenth Guru, and go about asking for licenses from people with their hair cut, what will people say about us?²³

In this manner, Bhindranwale advocated open defiance of the law of the land regarding bearing arms by stating that the restriction itself was part of the oppression against Sikhs. He argued that bearing arms was legitimate so far as Sikhism is concerned. Bhindranwale on behalf of such argument asked Sikhs to bear arms. As a result, a section of people who became followers of Bhindranwale bear fire arms and joined the movement.

Conclusion

Bhindranwale constructed narratives of Sikh history on the line to legitimize the idea of Sikhs being a different community. His narrative attempted to justify the idea that Sikhs if needed then may do violence but only to crush injustice. His narratives also bear the idea of retaliation. In his narratives, he seems strongly concerned that Sikhs are being discriminated. He confirmed in his narratives that Sikhs face discrimination. He mentioned a number of times that Hindus are favoured by the government. Bhindranwale with his particular agendas was successful in convincing his followers to justify their struggle on behalf of divisive history. Connectivity of political situation with historical example generated a justification for violent activities. Consequences of such narratives continued even after the end of the violent situation in Punjab. Narratives with Historical examples have far more approachability and applicability than the core rhetorical hate speeches. Historical examples become more effective in the popular sphere, especially when the society is not well educated or poorly educated. The domination of divisive historical narrative has immense possibility of spreading out where communal tension is prevalent. Application of divisive narratives widens the gap communally. Bhindranwale and his followers captured the attention of masses while narrating communal history in contemporary political situation and communal divide. Consistency of such narratives in the popular sphere of Punjab affects the popular imagination of masses regarding the present governing system. The divisive capability of Khalistani narratives also affects the community consciousness regarding the Hindu community. Introduction of these narratives developed a consciousness among common Sikh masses. In the popular sphere, the search for similar kinds of examples in history started after that. Bhindranwale with his particular agendas was successful in convincing his followers to justify their struggle on behalf of divisive history. Connectivity of political situation with historical example generated a justification for militant activities. Consequences of such narratives continued even after the end of the violent situation in Punjab. Narratives

with Historical examples have far more approachability and applicability than the core rhetorical hate speeches. Historical examples become more effective in the popular sphere, especially when the society is not well educated or poorly educated. The domination of divisive historical narrative has immense possibility of spreading out where communal tension is prevalent. Application of divisive narratives widens the gap communally. Bhindranwale and his followers captured the attention of masses while narrating communal history in contemporary political situation and communal divide. Consistency of such narratives in the popular sphere of Punjab affects the popular imagination of masses regarding the present governing system. The divisive capability of Khalistani narratives also affects the community consciousness regarding the Hindu community.

Notes and References

¹A Dhadhi or a Kavishar is the singer of *Var*. The *Var* tradition in the Punjab society is more than five hundred years old. It is as old as the tradition of *quissa*. Quissais form of popular historical accounts in the form of ballads. Traditionally quissas used to be presented in public gatherings.

²Two friends named as Bholanath Pande and Devender Pande avenged the arrest of Indira Gandhi in 1978.

³Satnam Singh and Gajinder Pal Singh hijacked an aeroplane in 1981 in Pakistan against the arrest of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale.

⁴Ranbir Singh Sandhu, *Struggle for Justice: Speeches and Conversation of Sant Jarnail Singh Khalsa Bhindranwale*. Dublin: Sikh Educational & Religious Foundation, 1999., pp. 254-255. Hereafter, Ranbir Singh Sandhu, *Struggle for Justice*.

⁵*ibid.*, p. 255.

⁶Balbir Singh, interview by researcher, October 17, 2012, on the way from Rajpura to Patiala.

⁷*Paranpatter* means oath document. The term is a combination of two words. One is *Paran*, which means oath or swearing, and the second *Pattar* means document.

⁸The meaning of *shantimai* in English is derived from *Punjabi-English Dictionary*, Patiala: Punjabi University, first edition 1994, fourth edition. 2009. The connotation of *shantimai* contains meaning at the same place; peaceful and non-violent. Bhindranwale has also used the term *shantimai* as non-violent.

⁹Khalsa Jagrati Lahar, *Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale Speeches*, California: Compact Disk, n.d., speech no.23.

¹⁰See K. N. Panikkar, 'Religious Symbols and Political Mobilization: The Agitation for a Mandir at Ayodhya', *Social Scientist*, vol. 21, no. 7/8, 1993, pp. 63-78; Joseph G.Bock, 'Communal Conflict, NGOs, and the Power of Religious Symbols', *Development in Practice*, vol. 7, no. 1, 1997, pp. 17-25; Bernard F. Donahue, 'The Political Use of Religious Symbols: A Case Study of the 1972 Presidential Campaign', *The Review of Politics*, vol. 37, no. 01, 1975, pp. 48-65.

¹¹There are five symbols in Sikhism, known as five Ks; *kachh* (cotton breeches), *kirpan* (sword, worn in a sheath), *kara* (steel or iron bangle), *kangha* (wooden comb), and *kesh* (uncut hair).

¹²Historians question the historicity of *Mahabharata*. Hence, historical existence of Krishna is questionable. But here the purpose of discussion is based on the people's understanding of *Mahabharata* as a historical incident. While conducting interviews I find that many Hindus and Sikhs believed that characters and incidents of *Mahabharata* were true. They believe in the existence of God *Krishna*.

¹³Ranbir Singh Sandhu, *Struggle for Justice*, p.41.

¹⁴*ibid.*, p.41.

¹⁵*ibid.*, p.42.

¹⁶*ibid.*, p.78.

¹⁷Gill, *The Knights of Falsehood*, pp. 85-86.

¹⁸Bhindranwale said in a speech cited in Mark Tully and Satish Jacob, in *Amritsar: Mrs Gandhi's Last Battle*, New Delhi: Rupa, p. 114. Hereafter see Tully, *Gandhi's Last Battle*.

¹⁹According to Bhindranwale, Chandu was a minister in Mughal Emperor Jahangir's administration.

²⁰Ranbir Singh Sandhu, *Struggle for Justice*, pp. 49-50.

²¹The *Miri-Piri* system was introduced by Sixth Guru, Guru Hargobind Singh. Guru Hargobind introduced two swords to Sikhism. He named these two swords as *Miri*

and *Piri*. The *Miri* signifies the political order or political rights to rule and *Piri* signifies the continuation of spiritual order.

²²*op.cit.*,p.114.

²³*ibid.*,p.412.

Jainism in South Kosala: A Study

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Abstract

Religion or Dharma plays most important role in Indian life. In ancient Indian literature Dhariyate Iti Dharma is famous definition of Dharma. South Kosala was very important part of ancient India. Modern Chhattisgarh has been accepted as South or Dakshin Kosala. The present Chhattisgarh region was also known by the names of Dandakaranya, Mahakoshala, Mahakantara, Kosala etc. during the ancient times. Various dynasties ruled directly or indirectly time to time on South Kosala i.e. Maurayas, Satavahanas, Nalas, Sharvapurias, Panduvamsis, Somavamsis, Kalachuri etc. some of the dynasties or rulers patronize Jainism. Jain archaeological remains found from entire south Kosala in the form of Temples, Statues, Inscriptions, Figurines etc. it shows the popularity of Jainism in South Kosala. Jainism entered in South Kosala from with their beginning and maintained their existence at present.

Religion has always special significance in India. According to mythological texts, religion has emerged for human welfare. It is famous about religion *Dharyate Iti Dharma*, it means, the one which is worthy to hold, is called *Dharma*. Regardless of age or era, the presence of religion has necessarily existed in society. By comparing all the societies of the world, it is clear that since the primitive period, the focal point of every society has been human, but it is also

true that after its origin, religion always influenced the personal and communal life of man. Due to the liberal Indian religion, it does not restrict the area of religion with the transcendental feelings of human life, but it also links its relation to heaven. The most importance of religion in Indian traditional society is that each person experiences an integral connection to the mythical world.

The geographical makeup of Chhattisgarh is one of the greatest gifts by Mother Nature where it is offered with such boundaries which facilitate the region to create its own culture and identity. It has also been observed on several occasions that the regions encompassing modern Chhattisgarh has been accepted as *Dakshin Kosala*. But in reality modern Chhattisgarh only forms the central part of ancient south Kosala. The term South or *Daksin Kosala* has been used only for the geographical expansion situated between 20° to 30° northern latitude and 81° to 84° eastern longitude. The mountain ranges of *Mekal*, *Mahendragiri*, *Machaka*, *Sihawa* and *Shuktimaan* (*Shuktimat*) form the natural boundaries of this region. During the ancient times the region of south Kosala also encompassed regions including the southern east part of modern Madhya Pradesh and western part of Orissa.

India bears a very glorious past since very ancient times and the region of *Dakshin Kosala* (Chhattisgarh) situated in the middle of the country shares no less glorified history. The southern east part of undivided Madhya Pradesh is known as Chhattisgarh which came into existence as a separate state on 1 November, 2000. It is noteworthy fact that no mention of Chhattisgarh is found in any of the stone, pillar or copper plate inscription across the lengths and breadths of the country. However, it is on the basis of the prevalent oral narratives and ancient beliefs that this region was referred to as *Kosala*, *Mahakosala* or *Dakshin Kosala* during the ancient times.

The origin of the word *Kosala* has been derived from the Sanskrit word '*Kushala*' which means 'to be happy' or 'happy'. The present Chhattisgarh region was also known by the names of *Dandakaranya*, *Mahakoshala*, *Mahakantara*, *Kosala* etc. during the ancient times. The region of modern Chhattisgarh comprises a part of the Deccan Plateau or Deccan Peninsula which is situated in the middle and southern east part. Chhattisgarh, also commonly known as the Plateau of Relics is surrounded by the Relic Mountains and plateaus.

Sixth century B.C. witnessed many religious movements in different parts of the world. In India too, we find an upheaval of new ideas leading to the rise of new philosophical tenets and religious sects, Jainism is one of them. In the mantras of Rigveda, there is reference to Rishabha, the first Tirthankara as claimed by Jains. However, the first twenty two Tirthankaras have no or very least historical evidence.

Only the last two, Parshwanath and Mahavira, are historical personages. On the basis of ancient literary sources, it is clear that the blooming of the contemplation tradition has been the first in India. Since ancient times, two parallel streams of contemplation have been flowing equally in traditional Indian society, first Vedic stream and second hearing or *Shruti* stream. Of these, the *Shruti* clause resulted in Jainism and philosophy in the later period. According to the prevailing belief in Jainism which is considered to be the oldest, when the creation begins again in the innovative period after the Holocaust, a Tirthankara arises to give the sermon in that plan. There are 24 Jain Tirthankara has been assumed between the first Tirthankara *Rishabhdeva* and the last Tirthankara *Mahavir Swaami*, who have been called 'Jinn' or 'Arhat'. The highest status in the Jain sect is called the *Tirthankara* which is derived from the word of *Teertha*. It literally means to save the world from the *Bhavsagara*. The responsibility of these Tirthankaras in Jain texts is to provide way of welfare salvation from *Bhavsagara* to the miserable people of the world.¹ Early descriptions about the historicity of Jainism are found in Jain literature, which are jointly called as *Agama* and which composed from the fifth century B.C. to sixth century A.D. Special publicity of Jainism took place in different parts of India, during *Mahavira Swami*'s era.

Since ancient times, the construction of the statues of Jainism and their foundations is found in archaeological sources and ancient Jain literature. According to some Jain texts, in the life of Mahavira, his sandalwood statue was made before taking his initiation.² Jain idols and other ruins start to meet in ancient South Kosala region only since ancient times. About 160 cm. heightened idol of Jain Teerthankara *Rishabhanatha* has been received from Ratanpur (Dist-Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh), which is stored in present in Raipur museum.³ There is a tree-sign on the chest of *Rishabhanatha* sitting in *Padmasana* and meditation mood, a halo above the head and an parasol over the head. On the one side of the statue, on the one side, Taurus is present as its symbol, while a woman and a man worshiping in the front and rear of *Tirthankar* are displayed. There is a Dharma-Chakra established in the middle of the posture. Located in Ratanpur, the statue of two Jain Tirthankaras of the 12th Century is inscribed in the *Kanthideval* Temple, which throws light on the wider popularity of Jainism in this region.⁴

In addition to this, an idol of Jain Tirthankara has been obtained from a bridge of Ratanpur which is currently preserved in Bilaspur Museum. Probably this statue has been obtained from the ruins of any Jain temple.⁵ From Ratanpur (Dist-Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh), an idol of eighth Jain Tirthankara *Chandraprabha* has been received in meditation posture in *Padmasana*.⁶ Many Jain idols have been found

near the famous *Mahamaya* temple of Ratanpur (Dist- Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh). A statue of Parshwanath has been received in the premises of Someshwar temple of Rajim (Dist- Gariyaband, Chhattisgarh).⁷ Four Digambar Jain statues are engraved in Khadagasana position in front of the main gate of the Sirpur temple⁸ (Dist- Mahasamund, Chhattisgarh). Nude sculptures of Jain Tirthankar Ajitnath, Neminath and Shreyasnn were written in the sanctum sanctorum of 'Bhand'⁹, the main temple of Jain in the middle of the medieval period, which is probably built in the era of Somavamshis.¹⁰ Rajim (Dist- Gariyaband, Chhattisgarh) has also received the statue of Jain Tirthankara Parshwanath which is sitting in the Padmasana pose on the Kundanaga.¹¹ The temple of God Rishabhdeva, found in Jain Tirthankara in Dongargarh temple (Dist- Rajnandgaon, Chhattisgarh), has been found lying in the courtyard of the temple, which is constructed by the local South Kosala style of ninety century AD.¹² Some huge Jain images built in the forests of the *Sakti* tehsil of Bilaspur and carved out of rock in *Dhanpur* of Bilaspur have been obtained. Apart from this, the ruins of Jain temples have also been received from *Dhanpur*¹³ (Dist- Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh). The 12th century magnificent Tirthankara idol has also been obtained from the local deity in *Budhikhar* of Bilaspur.¹⁴

In addition to the Tirthankars, details of Jain Goddess are also received in the Dakshin Kosala region. In Jain texts, twenty second Tirthankara *Neminath*'s Yakshi *Amana* or *Ambika* has been shown along with their two sons *Shubhankar* and *Priyankar*.¹⁵ The idol of twenty third Teerthankara *Parshwanath*'s Yakshi *Padmavati* has been found in many places. These idols are quadranghas, which have parasol of snakehead and armament in their hands.¹⁶

It appears that Brahmin followers in Dakshin Kosala region were also refuting Jain principles. In the *Malhar* (Dist- Bilaspur, Chhattisgarh) record of *Jajalladeva* II, the son of Gangadhar Somaraja is known as the legist of the scriptures and Jain followers are described as *Yama*.¹⁷ Apart from this, it is also known on the basis of literary details that the growing popularity of Brahmin religion in Dakshin Kosala, during Kalachuri age has also shocked the reputation of Buddhism as well as Jainism. This is the reason that in the archival and literary descriptions received from South Kosala, little description of this sect has been received. But it is also true that the practice of Jainism has existed since the ancient times in the Dakshin Kosala region.¹⁸

Notes and References

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- ²U. P., Shah, *Studies in Jain Art*, p. 4.
- ³*Pashan Pratima*, Mahant Ghasidas Museum, serial 83.
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- ⁵Pyarelal, Gupta, *Prachin Chhattisgarh*, Allahabad, 1973, p. 210.
- ⁶*Pashan Pratima*, Mahant Ghasidas Museum, serial 95.
- ⁷Vishnu Singh Thakur, *Rajim*, Bhopal, 1972, p. 113.
- ⁸Kanti Sagar Muni, *Khandharon ka vaibhav*, p. 287.
- ⁹*ibid.*, p. 150.
- ¹⁰*ibid.*, p. 38.
- ¹¹Vishnu Singh Thakur, *Rajim*, Bhopal, 1972, p. 113.
- ¹²Kanti Sagar Muni, *op.cit.*, p. 143.
- ¹³*ibid.*, p. 151.
- ¹⁴Rajkumar Sharma, *op.cit.*, p. 386.
- ¹⁵Gulab Chandra Jain, *op.cit.*, p. 22.
- ¹⁶*ibid.*, p. 29.
- ¹⁷*ibid.*, p. 33.
- ¹⁸Balchandra Jain, *Prachya Pratima*, Part -5, p. 36.

The Role of Judiciary vis-à-vis the Politics of the Government in Perpetuating the Caste System in India: An Analysis

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Abstract

Affirmative Action or positive discrimination as known in US, known as employment equity in Canada, reservation in India and Nepal, New Economic Policy in Malaysia and positive action in UK is the policy of favouring members of a disadvantaged group who suffer from discrimination within a culture. In a less legalistic manner Mullen has stated that affirmative action policies are attempts to make progress toward substantive, rather than merely formal, equality of opportunity for those groups which are currently under-represented in significant positions in society. Article 15(3), 15(4) and 16(4) of the Constitution of India constitute express constitutional values of compensatory or protective discrimination for the levelling up of the lowly, the deprived and the oppressed. The Directive Principles of State Policy specifically direct the state to take massive measures for the advancement of the backward groups. The Constitution itself provides the method for the identification of the scheduled caste and scheduled tribes, but leaves the task of the identification of the other backward groups to the local governments. In the field of public employment, the scheduled caste and tribes, unlike the other backward classes have a claim to be considered by the state, consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration. By numerous provisions these classes have been classified by the constitution itself as separate entities for discriminatory treatment. The courts here perform a formidable task of judicial policy making in order to insure that the protective schemes are confined strictly

to the constitutionally permissible objectives and methods. Such schemes must strike a balance between the fundamental rights of the individual and social justice to the backward classes. This paper will look how the judiciary has balanced the task of social rights as against individual rights, how the balance is tilted in favour of social rights. How the courts have set out the constitutional limitations as regards the extent of preferences, the permissible modes of eliminating group inequalities and the standards for selecting the legitimate beneficiaries of the beneficial schemes which is in contrast of the state governments pressure to exclusively rely on caste factor in determining the backwardness of the backward classes.

Introduction

The right to equality is one of the basic features of the constitution. The Preamble to the constitution of India emphasises the principle of equality as basic to the constitution. Even a constitutional amendment offending equality is invalid and neither Parliament nor any state legislature can transgress the principle of equality. In *M.G. Badappanavan v. State of Karnataka*,¹ it was held that equality is a basic feature of the constitution of India and any treatment of equals unequally or unequals as equals will be violation of basic structure of the constitution of India. Art 14 read along with Art 15 and 16 embody facets of magnified grandeur of equality and it is one of the magnificent corner stones of Indian democracy.² The constitutional protection of equality before law is one of the basic tenets of the constitution. It is a cardinal value which governs the policies and actions, particularly policies for employment and education. Judiciary is an independent organ of the government of India by virtue of Art 50 and is considered as a guardian of the Indian Constitution.

Historical Background

In India, caste is the most important basis of social categorization. Though caste is believed to have originated in a division of people on the basis of their natural inclinations and occupations, it has turned out in course of time to be hereditary. It has created social groups based on kinship and ethnicity. The hereditary occupations have created vested interests in the form of socio-economic monopolies and have bred an extreme form of exploitation.³ The caste system is overburdened

with considerations of ritualistic purity, and this in turn has engendered inflexibility, rigidity and feelings of superiority and inferiority. Social stratification both in traditional and modern society is based on caste, ethnic and racial groups. Priority is given to the group rather than to the individual. Insecurity in life makes the individual acknowledge his tie to his family, caste, village and others in that order. A man like the earlier times still prefers to classify his fellowmen in terms of his closeness to, or distance from, his family, caste, etc. Social interactions and political relationship too are dominated by the same consideration. Though the nature of caste and community interactions has changed over time, but considerations along ascriptive lines still remain important markers, both at the public and private domains. People feel a sense of solidarity when they belong to the same community and the feeling of distance which separates members who belong to different communities. The sense of community is often based on the feeling that its members have a common origin.⁴

Reservation Policy is one of the constitutional means adopted by India to address the problems of centuries of discrimination inflicted on certain groups resulting in all types of inequalities. Since the old order was based on hierarchical social order in which each group occupied a place in the social ladder. There were four broad groups: Brahmins (priests and teachers), Kshatriyas (warriors, often royalty), Vaisyas (traders, retailers and money lenders), Sudras (manual jobs). It was the Shudras who did the most menial jobs. They were regarded to be below the line of ritual purity and were regarded as 'untouchables'. Polluting jobs are still done by the castes to which they were traditionally assigned. An unemployed Brahmin would rather remain unemployed rather than become a scavenger, this stigmatized them a lot.⁵ In this particular order certain groups are believed to possess particular abilities and they too are hereditary. As a result, ascription rather than merit became a rule of the day.

Reservation in India tries to ensure the participation and empowerment of the historically excluded section through the mechanism of positive discrimination by way of fixing of quota in the electoral, public employment and educational institutions. The policy of reservation was a measure for the emancipation of the socially deprived and economically backward people of the nation known popularly and constitutionally as Scheduled Castes (SC)⁶, Scheduled Tribes (ST)⁷ and the Other Backward Classes (OBC).⁸ Though the reservation policy has been in existence and implemented for more than half a century, it has been facing many difficulties as well as twists and turns. In the process a number of new contours are emerging including the perpetuation of the caste system in India.⁹

Constitutional Perspective

A number of provisions have been made in the Constitution of India for ameliorating the condition of Scheduled castes/tribes in the country that have been subjected to varied kinds of sufferings and forced to lead sub-human life for centuries together.

Article 14

The State shall not deny to any person equality before the law or the equal protection of the laws within the territory of India.

Article 15

(1) The State shall not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex and place of birth or any of them.

(2) No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, place of birth or any of them, be subject to any disability, liability, restriction or condition with regard to:

(a) Access to shops, public restaurants, hotels and places of public entertainment; or

(b) The use of wells, tanks, bathing ghats, roads and places of public resort maintained wholly or partly out of State funds or dedicated to the use of the general public.

(3) Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any special provision for women and children.

(4)¹⁰ Nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes.

(5)¹¹ Nothing in this article or in sub-clause (g) of clause (1) of article 19 shall prevent the State from making any special provision, by law, for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes or the Scheduled Tribes in so far as such special provisions relate to their admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions referred to in clause (1) of article 30.

Thus under Article 15(4) State has power to make special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes. By 93rd Constitution Amendment, the scope of special provision is extended to admission to private educational institutions whether aided or unaided by the State as laid down in Art 15(5).

Article 16

Art 16 is another instance of the application of the general rule of equality before law laid down in Art 14 and of the prohibition of discrimination in Article 15 with

respect to the opportunity for employment or appointment to any office under the state.

Art 16 says,

1. There shall be equality of opportunity for all citizens in matters relating to employment or appointment to any office under the State.¹²
2. No citizen shall, on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex, descent, place of birth, residence or any of them, be ineligible for, or discriminated against in respect or, any employment or office under the State.
3. Nothing in this article shall prevent Parliament from making any law prescribing, in regard to a class or classes of employment or appointment to an office [under the Government of, or any local or other authority within, a State or Union territory, any requirement as to residence within that state or Union territory] prior to such employment or appointment.
4. Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for the reservation of appointments or posts in favour of any backward class of citizens which, in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State.

[(4-A)]¹³ Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation in matters of promotion [with consequential seniority,]¹⁴ to any class or classes of posts in the services under the state in favour of the Scheduled castes and scheduled tribes which, in the opinion of the state, are not adequately represented in the services under the state].

[(4-B)]¹⁵ Nothing in this article shall prevent the state from considering any unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved for being filled up in that year in accordance with any provision for reservation made under clause (4) or clause (4-A) as a separate class of vacancies to be filled up in any succeeding year or years and such class of vacancies shall not be considered together with the vacancies of the year in which they are being filled up for determining the ceiling of fifty percent reservation on total number of vacancies of that year].

5. Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any law which provides that the incumbent of an office in connection with the affairs of any religious or denominational institution or any member of the governing body thereof shall be a person professing a particular religion or belonging to a particular denomination.

Article 16(4) provides for State's power to make reservation in the matter of public employment in favour of any backward classes of citizens, which in the opinion of the State, is not adequately represented in the services under the State. There is an extension of this policy to provide reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in promotion with consequential seniority as added in Article 16(4-A).¹⁶ Reservation of posts exceeding 50 percent limit in order to fill up the backlog vacancies of Schedules Castes and Scheduled Tribes is also permitted in

Article 16(4-B).¹⁷ Thus, the policy of substantive equality through affirmative action and protective discrimination has been contemplated to deal with the problem of social backwardness arising from caste discriminations.

Article 17

Untouchability is abolished and its practice in any form is forbidden. The enforcement of any disability arising out of untouchability shall be an offence punishable in accordance with law.

Article 46

The State shall promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and, in particular, of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation. Art 46 therefore guides the State towards promotion of educational and economic interests of the SCs, STs and other weaker sections.

Article 330 and 332

Provisions are made to reserve seats in the House of People and the State Legislative Assemblies respectively for the SCs and STs and in proportion to their population in respective states.

Article 335

The State is required to acknowledge the claims of SCs/STs while making appointments to posts and services.

Article 243D and 243T

Provides reservation in Panchayats and Nagarpalikas.

Article 338

National Commissions for SCs and STs are constituted.

Article 338A

To investigate about all matters relating to safeguards, inquire into complaints about deprivation of rights, to recommend for their better protection.

Thus the first Backward Classes Commission was appointed under Art 340 under the chairmanship of Kaka Kalelkar in 1953. This commission met with an ignominious end. The Janata Govt in 1979 appointed the Second Backward Class Commission with chairman Bindeshwar Prasad Mandal. It submitted its report¹⁸ in 1980 which was implemented on 8th September 1993 with the exclusion of the socially advanced sections or the creamy layer.

Thus in *Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, 27% quota was reserved for socially and educationally backward classes in government services.¹⁹ The other recommendations of the Report are like the affirmative action programmes for

radical land reforms, educational and financial assistance, business and entrepreneurial schemes for the Backward Classes are waiting in the docks for future implementation. This expansive view of OBCs taken in the Report has now largely been institutionalized by the Courts and the government.

Judicial Response to Reservation

Champakam Dorairajan v. State of Madras AIR 1951 SC 226

In *Champakam Dorairajan v. State of Madras*, the government of Madras has reserved seats in state medical and engineering colleges for different communities in certain proportions on the basis of religion, race and caste. This was challenged as unconstitutional. The government defended its order on the grounds of Article 46 of the constitution, which permits the state to promote with special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people and in particular scheduled castes and scheduled tribes to secure social justice. But the Supreme Court struck down the order as it was violative of equality guaranteed under Article 15 (1) and observed that directive principles cannot override the guaranteed fundamental rights. As a result, the parliament brought an amendment to article 15 and inserted clause (4)²⁰ to make judgement invalid. Art 15(4) reads as, 'nothing in this article or in clause (2) of article 29 shall prevent the State from making any special provision for the advancement of any socially and educationally backward classes of citizens or for the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes'.

Balaji v. State of Mysore 1963 SC 649

In this case, the Supreme court ruled that selecting backward classes solely on the basis of ritual or social standing was impermissible under the constitution. *Balaji* struck down a government order as unconstitutional by which 68% of the seats in educational institutions were reserved for Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes and other backward classes on the ground of excessive reservation and as fraud on the constitution. *Balaji* recommended that caste could be used in conjunction with other indices of backwardness, such as poverty, occupation, place of residence etc.

Chitraleka v State of Mysore AIR 1964 SC 1823

In *Chitraleka v State of Mysore*, the court ruled that caste was by no means necessary to be taken into account while determining social and educational

backwardness. The thrust of *Balaji* and *Chitralkha* was that backward classes need not be based upon the closed status or ascriptive groups but on groups selected through the application of multiple test, occupational, territorial, income and even caste.

P. Rajendran v. State of Madras(1968) 2 SCR 786

The court upheld a caste based classification and accepted the state's affirmation in the affidavit that although the list was prepared solely on the basis of caste, each of the caste as a whole was found to be socially and educationally backward.

Rajendran had weakened the force of *Balaji* and *Chitralkha* which clearly rejected the notion that caste as a whole could be treated as backward.

Periakaruppan v. State of Tamil Nadu AIR 1971 SC 2303

In this case the Supreme Court upheld a classification based on caste. But the court advised that the government should not proceed on the basis that once a class is considered as backward it should continue as backward class for all the times.

Periakaruppan had weakened the force of *Balaji* and *Chitralkha* which clearly rejected the notion that caste as a whole could be treated as backward.

State of Andhra Pradesh v. U.S.V. Balaram AIR 1972 SC 1375

In *Balaram*, the Supreme court again upheld a caste based classification.

Balaram had weakened the force of *Balaji* and *Chitralkha* which clearly rejected the notion that caste as a whole could be treated as backward. But ultimately the *Balaji-Chitralkha* view prevailed in post *Balaram* decision.

Janki Prasad v. J&K AIR 1973 SC 930

In *Janki Prasad v. J&K* poverty alone could not be the sole determinant of backwardness. An exclusive poverty test would encompass a very large proportion in India and an 'untenable situation may arise because even in sections which are recognised as socially and educationally advanced there are large pockets of poverty'. The aim was not to give preference to every poor citizen regardless of his social and educational status but rather to help those who were backward due to historical reasons and unable to overcome the effects of past or present discrimination.

Uttar Pradesh v. Pradip Tandon AIR 1975 SC 563

An exclusive income test to determine backwardness was again rejected.

In *Jayashree v. State of Kerela* (1976) 3 SCC 730 The court agrees that both caste and poverty can relevant factors in determining backwardness but neither can be an exclusive factor.

Till the beginning of 1976, affirmative action was constitutional by virtue of the existence of Articles 15(4) and 16(4), both of which operated as exceptions to the equality and non-discrimination provisions of 15(1) and 16(1).

State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas AIR 1976 SC 490

In *State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas*, The majority took the view that Article 16(4) was not an exception to Art 16(1) but only an emphatic way of putting the extent to which equality of opportunity could be carried'. The majority in *Thomas* hold that Art 16(4) was not an exception to Art 16(1), but was a legislative device by which the framers of the constitution had sought to preserve a power untrammelled by the other provisions of the Article. It was a facet of Art 16(1) as 'it fosters and furthers the idea of equality of opportunity with special reference to under privileged and deprived classes of citizens'. Thus according to the majority reservation for backward classes may be made even outside the scope of clause (4) of Article 16. This is the new interpretation of Art 16(1) of the constitution. Thomas marks the beginning of a new judicial thinking on Article 16 and leads to greater concessions to SC/ST and other backward persons.

T. Devadasan v. Union of India AIR 1964 SC 179: (1964) 4 SCR 680

The Supreme Court by a majority of 4 : 1 struck down the 'carry forward rule' in this case as unconstitutional on the ground that the power vested in government under Art 16(4) could not be exercised so as to deny reasonable equality of opportunity in matters of public employments for members of classes other than backward. Whether Art 16(4) is a proviso or an exception to Art 16(1), it should not be interpreted so as to nullify or destroy the main provision, as otherwise it would render the guarantee of equality of opportunity in matter of public employment under Art 16(1) wholly illusory and meaningless.

Akhil Bharatiya Soshit Karamchari Sangh v. Union of India AIR 1981 SC 298 (1981) 1 SCC 246

In this case the Supreme Court upheld reservation of posts at various levels and making of various concessions in favour of the members of the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes.²¹

Politicians can take undue advantage of the rulings in the Thomas and ABSK cases and can create disharmony and dissensions amongst members of different classes of society.

K. C Vasanth Kumar v State of Karnataka AIR 1985 SC 1495

The Apex Court in this case laid down clear guidelines to be followed in the matter of reservation for SCs and STs.²²

Indra Sawhney v Union of India AIR 1993 SC 477

In this case, the Nine-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court enumerated the following essential points²³ pertaining to **reservation in Government employment under Article 16(4) of the Constitution**. The constitution bench of Supreme Court by 6:3 majority held that the decision of the Union government to reserve 27% government jobs for backward classes provided socially advanced persons, creamy layer among them are eliminated, is constitutionally valid.

The most welcome aspect of its verdict is that reservation will not apply to promotions in service. Another important aspect of the judgement is that the total reservation shall not exceed 50%. The third aspect is the exclusion of creamy layer among backward classes. The next aspect is that Article 16(4) is an exception to Article 16(1). It was held that Art 16(4) neither imposes any constitutional duty nor confers any fundamental right on any one for claiming reservation. The decision in this case has laid down a workable and reasonable solution to the reservation problem. But the politicians have tried to dilute the effect of this decision in order to make their vote bank intact. The Government has enacted the constitution 77th Amendment, 1995²⁴ in order to bypass the court's ruling on the point of reservation in promotions. This means reservation in promotion in government jobs will be continued in favour of SCs and STs even after Mandal's case if the government wants to do so. This is clearly intended to nullify the effect of the verdict in Mandal's case.

S. Vinod Kumar v. Union of India (1996) 6 SCC 580

The SC/ST had been enjoying the facility of relaxation of qualifying marks and standards of evaluation in matters of reservation in promotion. The Supreme Court in *S. Vinod Kumar v. Union of India* held that such relaxations in matters of reservation were not permissible under article 16(4) of the constitution in view of the command contained in Art 335 of the constitution. The Apex court also held that the law on the subject of relaxations of qualifying marks and standards of evaluation in matter of reservation in promotion is one laid down in Para 831 of *Indira Sawhney v. Union of India*. In order to implement the judgements of the Supreme Court, such relaxations had to be withdrawn with effect from 22.07.1997. In order to restore the relaxations which were withdrawn the Constitution 82nd Amendment, 2000 was brought which amended Art 335 of the Constitution and added a proviso at the end.²⁵

Union of India v. Virpal Singh Chauhan (1995) 6 SCC 684

The two judges Bench of the Supreme Court in this case reiterated what the court had said in *Indra Sawhney* that providing reservation in promotion was not warranted by Art 16(4).

Ajit Singh I AIR 1996 SC 1189

The court in this case hold that the balance must be maintained in such a manner that there is no reverse discrimination against the general candidates and that any rule, circular or order giving seniority to the reserved candidates promoted at roster point, would be violative of Article 14 and 16(1) of the constitution of India.

The judgments of the Supreme Court in the case of Virpal Singh Chauhan (1995) 6 SCC 684 and Ajit Singh No I AIR 1996 SC 1189, have adversely affected the interest of the Government servants belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes category in the matter of seniority on promotion to the next higher grade. Therefore the Constitution 85th Amendment, 2001 was brought which substituted for the words 'in matters of promotion to any class' in clause (4A) of Art 16 with the words 'with consequential seniority, to any Class'.

M. Nagaraj v. Union of India (2006) 8 SCC 212, 265 : AIR 2007 SC 71

Later the Constitution Bench in this case held that when the constitutional amendments which were under challenge²⁶ were enabling provisions, it was open to the state to exercise their discretion to make such provisions after collecting quantifiable data showing backwardness of the class and inadequacy of representation of that class in public employment in addition to compliance with Art 335. This must subject to the clarification that reservation provision does not exceed the ceiling limit of 50% or obliterate the creamy layer or extend the reservation indefinitely.

Ashok Kumar Thakur v. Union of India (2008) 6 SCC 1

The Supreme Court held that the Constitution 93rd Amendment Act, 2006 providing 27% reservation in admission to OBC candidates in higher educational institution like IIT's and IIM's is constitutional. The Amendment provided that without touching the present strength of general category of students, OBC candidates can be given reservation. The court held that benefit of reservation must be reviewed in after every five years. The creamy layer requirement will not apply to SC's or ST's. It may be remembered that in the Mandal commission case, the Supreme Court held that there can be no reservation to the other backward classes in higher educational institutions and post graduate level in the universities. But due to vote bank policy, this rule of Mandal commission has been given burial by 93rd Amendment Act, 2005 of the constitution.

Demand for more Reservation: Politics of Reservation

There is growing demand by some castes, to get included in the Other Backward Classes (OBC) category, and by some OBC's to be considered as S.Ts (for instance, Jats in Haryana and Rajasthan; Gujjars of Rajasthan; Moran, Muttock, Tai Ahom, Koch Rajbongshi, Sootea and Tea Tribes in Assam). Very recently the Haryana Jats once again agitated demanding OBC status. Thirty years after the Patedars or Patels of Gujarat took to the streets protesting against reservation for Dalits, Adivasis and Other Backward Castes in government jobs and educational institutions, they are agitating once again. This time, the Patels want to be counted as one of the socially and economically weaker communities in the State.²⁷

Parliament passed the Constitutional (103 Amendment) Bill, 2019²⁸ guaranteeing 10% quota in education and employment to economically weaker sections from the upper caste. The Act amended Articles 15²⁹ and 16³⁰ of the Constitution. The amendment aims to provide reservation to those who do not fall in 15 (5) and 15(4). An explanation has been added that 'economic weakness' shall be decided on the basis of 'family income' and other 'indicators' of economic disadvantage. This 10% reservation would be in addition to the existing reservations and subject to a maximum of 10 per cent of the total seats in each category. Would it be a healthy practice to make such a reservation policy based merely on the economic criteria. The earlier verdicts of the Supreme court mention that reservations need to be implemented by taking three factors into considerations, (i) backwardness of the class, (ii) inadequacy of representation in the service and (iii) compliance with Article 335 of the constitution. Moreover, by making 10% reservation for the economically poor general category people, the overall reservation now stands at 60%, thereby violating the Mandal Judgment of 50% reservation as the ceiling. It is important to revisit that the rationale behind instituting reservation in jobs and educational institutions was not to eliminate economic inequality but to dismantle the monopoly of a few castes in government services and educational institutions and to create equal opportunities for the backward classes in an otherwise unequal society.³¹ Therefore the Constitution (103 Amendment) Act, 2019 is seen as a politics of vote bank to appease people of the upper caste for the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. This has become counter-productive and reverse discrimination making the caste war on in the society. To lend immortality to the reservation policy is to defeat its raison d'être, to politicise the provision for communal support and party ends is to subvert the solemn undertaking of Art 16(1), to casteify 'reservation' even beyond the dismal groups of backward most people, euphemistically describe as SC and ST, is to run a grave constitutional risk. Caste, ispo facto, is not class in a secular state.³²

Conclusion

After so many years of its implementation, the reservation policy has reached a stage where both its supporters and critics are unhappy about it. The former are unhappy because it has not created a noticeable impact on the social and economic conditions of the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), majority of whom still continue to be socially isolated, illiterate and poor. Its critics complain that in matters of employment, promotions and admissions, reservations have been stretched too far at the cost of merit and equity giving rise to frustration and alienation among the unreserved category. The anti-reservationists also argue that the caste based reservation will only perpetuate the notion of caste in society, rather than weakening it as envisaged by the Constitution. Reservation according to them is only a tool to meet narrow political ends. Allocating quotas is a form of discrimination which is contrary to the right to equality. Reservations reduce elections to quid pro quos pitting castes against each other and fragmenting Indian society. They also complain that the policy of reservation has never been subject to a widespread social or political audit. Before extending reservation to more groups, the entire policy needs to be properly examined, and its benefits over a span of nearly 70 years have to be gauged.

Notes and References

¹AIR 2001 SC 260.

²*Indra Sawhney v. Union of India*, AIR 1993 SC 477.

³G. Thimmaiah, 'Caste and class in Karnataka', *Social Scientist*, pp.31-42, 1983.

⁴A. Beteille, *Society and politics in India: Essays in a comparative Perspective*, Vol. 63, Berg Pub Limited, p. 49, 1991.

⁵A. Deshpande, 'Quest for equality: affirmative action in India', *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations*, 154-163, 2008.

⁶The SCs were denied education, and could only perform menial and polluting jobs, besides suffering from a variety of other deprivations as defined in D. Gupta, *Towards Affirmative Action*, *India International Centre Quarterly*, 33(3/4), 150-161, 2006.

⁷In the case of the STs, it was their physical isolation that put them at a disadvantage with respect to others in society. Schedule Caste and Schedule Tribes shall have the meanings assigned to them under clause (24) and clause (25) of Article 366 of the Constitution.

⁸The OBCs, on the other hand, are politically powerful on account of the fact that many of them are self-sustaining farmers and owner-cultivators, *supra* note 7.

⁹J. L. N. Rao, 'Affirmative action in India: Emerging contours', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 483-492, 2008.

¹⁰Ins by 1st Constitution Amendment, Act 1951.

¹¹Ins by 93rd Constitution Amendment, Act 2005, s.2 (w.e.f 21.1.2006).

¹²The term state denotes both the Central and the state governments and their instrumentalities. State as an employer is entitled to fix separate quotas of promotions for degree holders, diploma holders and certificate holders in exercise of its rule making power under Art 309.

¹³Ins. By Constitution 77th Amendment Act, 1995, S.2 w.e.f 17.06.1995.

¹⁴Ins. By Constitution 85th Amendment Act, 2001, dated 4th January, 2002 (deemed to have come into force on 17-06-1995), for the words 'in matters of promotion to any class'.

¹⁵Ins. By Constitution 81st Amendment Act, 2000, S.2 w.e.f 9.06.2000. The Amendment envisages that the unfilled reserved vacancies in a year are to be carried forward to subsequent years and that these vacancies are to be treated as distinct and separate from the current vacancies during any year. The rule of 50% reservation laid down by the Supreme Court is to be applied only to the normal vacancies and not to the posts of backlog of reserved vacancies. This means that the unfilled reserved vacancies are to be carried forward from year to year without any limit, and are to be filled separately from the normal vacancies. This Amendment also modifies the proposition laid down by the Supreme Court in *Indra Sawhney*. The Amendment does increase the employment opportunities for the SC/ST and OBC candidates.

¹⁶Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from making any provision for reservation [in matters of promotion, with consequential seniority, to any class or classes of posts in the services under the State in favour of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes which, in the opinion of the State, are not adequately represented in the services under the State.

¹⁷Nothing in this article shall prevent the State from considering any unfilled vacancies of a year which are reserved for being filled up in that year in accordance with any provision for reservation made under clause (4) or clause (4A) as a separate class of vacancies to be filled up in any succeeding year or years and such class of vacancies shall not be considered together with the vacancies of the year in which they are being filled up for determining the ceiling of fifty per cent. reservation on total number of vacancies of that year

¹⁸Popularly known as 'The Mandal Commission Report'.

¹⁹1992 Supp (3) SCC 217: AIR 1993 SC 477. [J. A.M. Ahmadi did not express any opinion on this point].

²⁰*The Constitution 1st Amendment Act*, 1951.

²¹M.P. Jain, *Indian Constitutional Law*, LexisNexis, p.960, 2009.

²²(a)The reservation in favour of SCs and STs must continue as at present i.e without the application of a means test, for a further period of 15 years. Another 15 years will make it 50 from the commencement of the constitution, a period reasonably long for these classes to overcome the baneful effects of social oppression, isolation and humiliation.

b) The means test *i.e* the test of economic backwardness ought to be applicable even to the SC's and STs after 15 years (after 2000AD). (c) So far other backward classes are concerned two tests should be applied: (i) That they should be comparable to the SCs and STs in the matter of their backwardness; (ii) That they should satisfy the means test such as the state government may lay down, in the context of prevailing economic conditions; (d) The policy of reservations in employment, education and legislative institutions should be reviewed every five years or so. This will afford an opportunity to the state to rectify distortions arising out of particular facts of the reservation policy.

²³(a) Backward class of citizens in Article 16(4) can be identified on the basis of caste and not only on economic basis.

(b) *Article 16(4) is an exception to Article 16(1).*

(c) Backward Classes in *Article 16(4)* are not similar to as socially and educationally backward in *Article 15(4)*.

(d) Creamy Layer must be excluded from backward classes.

(e) *Article 16(4)* permits classification of backward classes into backward and more backward classes.

(f) A backward class of citizens cannot be identified only and exclusively with reference to economic criteria.

(g) Reservation shall not exceed 50 percent.

(h) Reservation can be made by 'Executive Order'.

(i) No reservation in promotions.

(j) The majority held that in view of the guidelines laid down in its decision there is no need to express any opinion on the correctness or adequacy of the exercise done by the Mandal Commission.

(k) The majority made it clear and directed that all objections to the criteria evolved by the Central and State Government to exclude socially advanced persons, *creamy layer*, from other backward classes shall be preferred only before the Supreme Court and not before any High Court or tribunal. Similarly, any petition challenging the validity, operation or implementation of the two OM's shall be filed only before the Supreme Court and not before any court.

²⁴Inserted by *the Constitution (Seventy-seventh Amendment) Act, 1995*, Sec w.e.f 17.06.1995.

²⁵In *Article 335* of the constitution, the following proviso shall be inserted at the end, namely, 'Provided that nothing in this article shall prevent in making of any provision in favour of the members of the Scheduled Castes and the Scheduled Tribes for relaxation in qualifying marks in any examination or lowering the standards of evaluation, for reservation in matters of promotion to any class or classes of services or posts in connection with the affairs of the Union or of a State.

²⁶The main issue in this case before the court was whether the impugned constitutional amendments (77th, 81st, 82nd and 85th Amendments) violate the principle of basic structure of the constitution?

²⁷<http://www.ndtv.com/india-news/the-real-story-of-what-hardik-patel-21-wants-and-why-1210424> as assessed on 20. 12. 2015.

²⁸This bill received the assent of the president on January 13, 2019.

²⁹Article 15 (6) is added to provide reservations to economically weaker sections for admission to educational institutions including private educational institutions, whether aided or unaided by the State, other than the minority educational institutions referred to in clause (1) of Article 30.

³⁰Article 16 (6) is added to provide reservations to people from economically weaker sections in government posts.

³¹Maanvender Singh, 'Reservation amidst the Din of 'Development', *Economic and Political Weekly*, September 17, 2016, Vol LI No 38.

³²[(81) A. SC. P 306] Quoting Krishna Iyer JJ from H. M.Seervai, 2008, *Constitutional Law of India, Vol 4*, Universal Law Publishing Co., New Delhi, 2008, p.614.

Mariani : The birth place of anti-British Movement in Assam

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Abstract

The freedom struggle is an indispensable part of a nation's history. So far as democratic system is concerned, it is much more important than any other political system of other nations. As India is the largest democratic country of the World, hence, in writing a complete history of freedom movement of undivided India, emphasis must be given to the contributors of freedom fighters of various parts of India who revolted against the British imperialism. Tipu Sultan of Hyderabad revolted first against the British rule in India. He is said to be the fore runner of freedom movement in India. Since the time of Tipu Sultan, several personalities can be mentioned upto 1857 when the first freedom struggle spread like a fire in India. Though the first freedom struggle was failure no doubt, yet it proved the way of organised system of freedom movement. Hence, the leaders of local rebellions of various parts of British India are to be taken into consideration in writing the comprehensive history of freedom movement.

In the light of this perspective, a humble attempt has been made in brief to trace out the anti-British feeling and militancy of the greater Mariani, the far south east region of Jorhat district of Assam. Noteworthy that, the British occupied Assam as after the Anglo-Burmese war(1824-26). The far reaching effect was that the long six hundred years of Ahom rule came to an end. However, Gomdhar Konwar, a prince of Ahom ruling dynasty rose in revolt within these years in 1828 from the above British occupation. His fight was failure no doubt. He earned of being the first freedom fighter in Assam in particular and North-East India in general. Hence, the less famous place like Mariani earned the credit of being the birth place of freedom movement in Assam.

In 1826, Assam passed into the British hands as a result of the Anglo-Burmese war (1824-26). Several companies of troops were kept in various parts of upper Assam even after the expulsion of Burmese from the soil of Assam. It was done with a view to subduing those Assamese people who did not reconcile to the British rule which abruptly changed the situation of Upper Assam in every aspect. Within a span of one year, the British not only altered the political system of Assam, but caused profound change in the revenue policy of the previous Ahom government. From this time onwards, the people had to pay their land revenue in cash instead of kind which was the prevailing system during the Ahom administration. The insufficient supply of money in Assam during this time was a great hardship for the peasantry who could not afford to pay land revenue and other taxes in cash. Discontent with alien rule became soon manifest after the first flashes of enthusiasm for the newcomers had died down. The upper class in the society lost the powers and privileges, their former social status and positions under the new rule. Both upper class and the masses were equally dissatisfied with the new system of administration. Assam was ripe for a great rebellion against the British rule at this moment. The aggrieved and discontented Assamese people wanted a strong leadership to resist the revenue measures of the British and to restore former power and privileges of the Ahom nobility in Assam. At this critical juncture, both Chandra Kanta Singh and Punandar Singh, ex-kings of the former Ahom kingdom who also opposed the Burmese rule in Assam, could not provide able leadership due to their pro-British policy. Instead of leading an anti-British movement, they cherished an idea of being tributary kind under the British rule.

No wonder, at this time, the people of the present South east Jorhat sub-division cantering Mariani produced a bold, energetic, indomitable and able Ahom prince to lead the dissatisfied people and ex-nobles of the Ahom court in a rebellion against the mighty British. The name of the said Ahom prince was Gomdhar Konwar. He was the son of Phena Konwar of Dihingia clan of Ahom royal dynasty. He was originally from Lakwa. With a view to escaping from the Burmese atrocities there, he came to Taratali for shelter and began to settle here permanently during the Burmese rule. It is to be noted that present greater Nakachari was known as Taratali then. Here at Taratali, he set up his base camp for collecting arms and ammunitions and recruited local men to build up a strong army against the British. Thus, he was biding his time to rise in revolt against the British with the supports from the local people around Mariani and Nakachari locality. He availed himself the full advantage of the oppressed presents of Sonowal, who face the economic

hardship due to exorbitant land revenue imposed on them by the British. It is presumed that they lent support to him to stop the repressive measures of the British officers in relation to land revenue policy. It is to be worth mentioned here that present Mariani was called Sonowal then. Even today, the nearby Mariani T.E. is called Hunwal (The perverted term of Sonowal) and another tea garden at a distance at 4 K.M. from present Mariani town is called New Sonowal.

In addition, the support of the local people, Gamdhar corresponded with the ex-functionaries of the previous Ahom government and solicited their help and co-operation to make the revolt a successful one. Simultaneously, he was looking for an opportunity to strike at the root of the newly founded British Raj. That was towards the end of 1828. The time was also a most opportune for him from the strategic point of view when the political agent was absent from Sodiya for a long time and several companies of troops were withdrawn from eastern Assam. After all, the apparently inadequately defended state of upper Assam emboldened Gomdhar and his supporters to measure their strength against the British Raj. At first, the insurgents made him king formally according to the rituals of the Ahom royalty in the month of September, 1828 at Taratali. Then, in the last week of November when the brisk preparation was over, the rebel force began to march towards Jorhat under his leadership. The aim was that the insurgents would meet their collaborators at Jorhat. From there, they would proceed to Rangpur to drive out the British force from there with a view to capturing power of upper Assam. But captain Neufville, the political agent of upper Assam got secret information in advance about the imminent rebellion. He lost no time in taking counter measures against this rebellion. He then and there sent off a large detachment under the command of Lt. Rudderford to meet the oncoming of the insurgents. He dispersed Gamadhar and his followers very easily and they fled to Naga Hills after offering heroic resistance at Mariani. At Naga Hills, Gomdhar roamed from jungle to jungle with a view to avoiding arrest from the British. But, at last finding no other alternative, the fugitive Prince, Gomadhar and his followers surrendered before Lt. Rudderford. He and his followers were presented before the gram panchayat held at Jorhat for their trial. The panchayat offered capital punishment finding him guilty of treason. However, captain Neufville commuted this order and punished him with the banishment from Assam for seven years. He served a term of seven years imprisonment at Rongpur jail in Bengal. But it is not known what happened to this prince afterwards. Thus began and ended the first anti-British movement of Assam at Mariani.

The encounter at Mariani with the British army by Gomdhar and his followers is not a rebellion in proper sense of the term. But real glory lies in the fact

that the rebellious activities got its breeding ground around Mariani and Nakachari area within less than three years of the British rule in Assam. Though it was the feeble resistance, as the British called it, at the same time, they admitted themselves that it produced a most precocious effect as it unsettled the minds of the Assamese throughout the province. Had Gomdhar succeeded in making, or threatened Rongpur(Sivasagar) the immediate result would have been of a far different nature. In that case, the course of anti-British movement in Assam would have been otherwise altogether.

The villagers of Sonowal, Mariani, Nakachari lent support to Gomdhar only after getting assurance from Gomdhar that they would be given more land and would not be oppressed by excessive revenue and other taxes. The villagers of this vast locality were infused with the anti-British feelings altogether from the very beginning of the British rule here. Such anti-British feeling created a congenial atmosphere for raising a rebel force here for Gomdhar Konwar and it helped him to organise revolt against the British. He was failure no doubt. But he earned the distinction of being the first standard bearer of revolt against foreign rule in Assam. Hence, credit must go to the than common masses of this vast locality, who were he forerunners of the anti-British movement in Assam under the leadership of the said Gomdhar Konwar and his followers.

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Sorrow of Women during Partition of Punjab An Historical Analysis of Ice-Candy-Man

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Abstract

In the ethnic bouleversement during Partition of Punjab in 1947, the women were subjected to extreme forms of violence. The varied psychosocial aspects by which women would have to pass through during the partition turmoil find little mention in official records. The partition fiction especially those written by women authors rendered some insight into such 'hidden histories' of women. Plausibly, the paper, in its totality focuses on to enumerate the reasons behind such ghastly gender-based violence that happened in Punjab at the time of India's Independence. An effort has been made to ascertain the active credo behind the changing communal atmosphere in Punjab that ultimately targeted the women in the name of social and communal pride. Furthermore, the recovery and rehabilitation measures adopted by the governments to rescue women on both sides are also taken into consideration.

Numerous psychological aspects such as sudden separation of families, overcoming problems and difficulties, gathering resources and starting their lives afresh, mental agony related to permanent dislocation 'find little reflection in written history'.¹ It has been noticed that mostly the history was written by men giving privileged position to men as history makers whereas completely ignoring the feminine contribution to history. The women have been portrayed in history as 'objects of study, rather than as subjects'.² Lerner said that universal history is 'equally concerned with men, women, establishment and the passing away of patriarchy'.³ However it is the literature that mostly tries to produce the feminine perspective in a much bigger way especially where the writers are females. So, for this specific reason, we had chosen the partition fiction that was written by the female author.

At the time of partition of Punjab, the women were subjected to severe violence that included abduction, rape, mutilated bodies and forced conversions. We had tried to analyse the sorrow of women in the light of the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* written on the theme of partition by Pakistani writer *Bapsi Sidhwa* (born in 1938). She was living in Lahore at the time of Partition. The novel was published in 1988 by Penguin Books, India. The film-maker Deepa Mehta's film *Earth* (1998) was based on novel *Ice-Candy-Man*. The author's assertions were corroborated with the available historical resources. The author has written the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* in a semi-autobiographical manner. The storyline revolves around Parsee family (author also is of Parsee descent) that was living in Lahore at the time of Partition. The chief narrator in the novel is *Lenny*, an eight-year-old child inflicted with the disease of polio (author also got inflicted with polio at the age of two and was eight years old at the time of partition) who usually roam around with her *Ayah* (*Shanta*, the Hindu caretaker) whom she loves the most. The author Bapsi Sidhwa very remarkably produced the feminine aspects in the novel through the character of *Ayah* around whom the entire storyline revolves. All the ambiguities related with the condition of women – during the dark and treacherous times of communal violence that triggered during the Partition – were cleared in the novel. It not only provides the historical and political background but also presents the psychosocial influences upon the society at large. The noted critic Ralph Crane remarked about the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* that 'it may be that the atrocities of 1947 are best seen through the innocent naive eyes of a child, who has no Hindu, Muslim or Sikh axe to grind....Lenny is free both from the prejudices of religion, and from the prejudices against women and the constraints she will be subject to as she grows older'.⁴

The communal riots that envisaged during the partition process had a remarkable element of 'widespread sexual savagery: about 75,000 women are thought to have been abducted and raped by men of religions different from their own (and indeed sometimes by men of their own religion)'.⁵ Women were made the victims as they were being treated as territory to be won in egocentric communal strife in the name of nationalism. They were being kidnapped, faced forcible conversions, raped, mutilated and publicly humiliated. During the partition process, women had become the chief sufferers⁶ that faced worst kind of humiliation in human history.

Punjab was facing a crisis at the time of partition of India. The rising tide of Indian nationalism – that gave freedom from British clutches – failed to curb the communalist elements that finally resulted into the partition of India and the creation of Muslim dominated new nations of West and East Pakistan. The province of Punjab got severely affected by this horrendous step of partitioning the country. Punjab was divided into two different parts viz. Muslim dominated West Punjab

that was included into West Pakistan and the other one was East Punjab that remained with Indian Territory. The partition put enormous impact upon the people living in Punjab region during those times. The migration of population due to political changes had given a traumatic experience to the people of Punjab. It not only included communal violence of killings, riots, lootings and loss of property but also brought psychosocial challenges of the loss of homeland, disintegration of friends, family and entire social setup. The government machinery had totally collapsed when it was needed to be the most efficient. The situation was so tense that even the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru made the following statement in a Broadcast from New Delhi on August 19, 1947:

‘the Provincial Governments of East and West Punjab had to face a terrible crisis in the very hour of their birth.... there has been sufficient murder and arson and crime of all descriptions in many parts of the Punjab, and this fair province, so rich in promise, has suffered untold agony during these months’.⁷

The signs of communal tension started manifesting much earlier than the actual process of partition initiated. In the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, the changing atmosphere is very clearly depicted in the following lines:

‘These are bad times – Allah knows what’s in store. There is big trouble in Calcutta and Delhi: Hindu-Muslim trouble. The Congress-wallahs are after Jinnah’s blood...’⁸

After the passing of the Indian Independence Bill, the dominions of India and Pakistan have been created. Sardar Raghbir Singh Sandhanwalia, Officer of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire, was having apprehensions that the division of Punjab will increase communal conflict. He wrote a letter on 20th July 1947 to Sardar Vallabh Bhai Patel in which he wrote that ‘the era of freedom ushered on India has brought about the defence problem to the fore front and if the Congress did not rise to the occasion and lulled the masses into a false sense of security, the disaster will be of highest magnitude’.⁹ On the contrary, the general masses were quite ignorant of the rising communal tide and they didn’t realize the fact that due to such increasing communal conflicts, the day will come when they have to leave their ancestral lands. The mindset of women at that time was shown in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* in these lines when Ayah spoke:

‘What’s it to us if Jinnah, Nehru and Patel fight? They are not fighting our fight’.¹⁰

The innocent women were nowhere near to the reality of the future outcome of the prevailing communal hatred. The author had further given the glimpse of the thinking pattern of the general women folk when Ayah categorically stopped the discussion related to communal hatred in these lines:

‘If all you talk of is nothing but this Hindu-Muslim business, I’ll stop coming to the park’.¹¹

It is, perhaps, people were knowingly reluctant to accept the changing scenario as it was very difficult for them to understand such immediate hatred against the brethren with whom they were living collectively from many generations. People were not ready to leave their homelands. The non-muslim members of the Sind legislative Assembly unanimously passed the resolution against the partition of India. They further said that, ‘division of India instead of solving the communal problem will further accentuate it, if the proposed partition was undertaken. They as elected representatives of thirty percent of non-Muslim population in Sind declare their definite opposition to the proposed partition of India.’¹²

The change in the mindset of society was so abrupt that people who were living from centuries in the close knitted neighbourhood – despite being from different religious communities – started behaving in an opposite manner. The age-old relations quickly melted in the religious fervour. Now one can only see through the eyes of one’s own religion. This was clearly shown in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* as ‘And I become aware of religious differences. It is sudden. One day everybody is themselves – and the next day they are Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian. People shrink, dwindling into symbols.’¹³

After getting assured of the creation of Pakistan, the Muslim League hoisted its flag on the Sind Secretariat and shouted the slogans of ‘*Allah O Akbar*’. This incident provoked the sentiments of Hindus and Dr Chotaram Gidwani, President of the Sind Congress Committee remarked that ‘if the future of the Pakistan state is going to be constituted on a theocratic basis and if it adopts the League flag as the flag of the Pakistan state then I prone to declare unhesitatingly that I shall not be a citizen of such a state and will prefer to be an alien’.¹⁴

It was the responsibility of the State to control and diminish such kind of increasing communal tensions, but it was felt that at some places leaders of political parties – instead of helping in easing out the situations – gave some provocative statements which further deteriorated the environment. The leaders of Muslim League openly started propagating the religious bias as such Pirzada Abdus Sattar, Reforms and Development Minister, Sind said that, ‘the Sind has been the gateway of Islam in India and it shall be the gateway of Pakistan too. It was the first to pass the Pakistan resolution and it will be the first to declare itself a unit of the great Islamic state of Pakistan to be’.¹⁵ Within a span of few days the rage of communal hatred spread throughout the Punjab province and riots broke out. At this juncture, the women were treated as tools to take revenge, to defeat and dishonour the opposite

side. The years of mutual faith and trust vanished into oblivion. The author in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* shown this loss of trust in the following lines when the Muslim mob came to Jenny's house to find Ayah as she was the only Hindu girl living in the house of Parsees and at that particular moment, *Ice-Candy-Man* the most trusted person of Jenny betrayed her:

'Ice-candy-man is crouched before me. 'Don't be scared, Lenny baby,' he says. 'I'm here'.... 'I'll protect Ayah with my life!...I know she is here. Where is she?... I say: On the roof....Ice-candy-man's face undergoes a subtle change....I know I have betrayed Ayah'.¹⁶

During those difficult times, even people betrayed in the most disciplined army and police forces. An incident of violence was reported through the telegraph that 'a train full of Muslim refugees safely evacuated from Bathinda under escort of Fourteenth Punjab comprising of four Sikh and eight Muslim soldiers left towards Bahawalnagar...when train arrived at Kotmal, Muslim soldiers attacked their Sikh companions and snatched their eight machine guns and were about to kill them but the Sikh soldiers succeeded in taking refuge with Bikaner state forces present there'.¹⁷ The mass exodus started during the partition. It was estimated that nearly twelve million people crossed both sides of the border. In a span of three months nearly 673 refugee trains were pressed into service to evacuate the persons. By the end of the month of August, air planes also started lifting people, but it was mostly remained confined to rich class and senior bureaucrats.¹⁸ It was reported in the newspaper *Hindustan Times* that during those times 'four thousand non-Muslims are daily leaving Sind by Jodhpur Railway Special and other passenger trains for Marwar and other states. It is estimated that two thousand persons are daily leaving Karachi by sea and air for India'.¹⁹ The trains were being attacked and entire bogies were put on fire. Parsram V. Tahilramani, MLA, Secretary of the Sind Assembly Congress Party asserted that 'there has been carnage in Sind to some extent. Nearly four hundred Sikhs were killed in the Nawab Shah district of Sind last month; a branch line train was derailed between Nawab Shah and Mirpur Khas towards the end of August and passengers were fired at resulting in twenty deaths and several injuries. Over fifty Hindus and Sikhs were stabbed in running trains and many were injured when thrown out of trains'.²⁰ British ICS officers of Sind Le Mesurier, Chief Secretary and C.B.B. Clee Revenue Commissioner have decided to resign after the communal violence in Nawab Shah district of Sind where many Sikhs have been murdered and some were converted.²¹ In the three-page letter written on 22nd August 1947 to Sardar Patel from the office of the Gurdwara Committee Sri Panja Sahib, Hasan Abdal, Attock, the manager Sardar Ishar Singh had apprised the situation in Attock that all communication has snapped since 8th August and he asked, 'Is it known to our leaders that during the last ten days wholesale arson and mass killing of Hindus

and Sikhs has been going on throughout the main line from Lahore to Lala Musa? I appeal to you on behalf of Hindus and Sikhs of western Punjab to try to save us'.²²

The autonomy and identity of women was curtailed. Even they experienced betrayal at the hands of their own families in many ways. Initially, women were forced to commit suicides in order to save the honour of the family and community and when some of them were rescued later, their own families refused to accept them. In the novel *Ice-Candy-Man*, the author had very beautifully portrayed the collapse of trust and relationship and that was done no other than by the person to whom the victim trusted most. The horrific act of abduction was shown in these lines of the novel:

'Her lips are drawn away from her teeth, and the resisting curve of her throat opens her mouth like the dead child's screamless mouth....Four men stand pressed against her, propping her body upright, their lips stretched in triumphant grimaces... her mouth slack and piteously gaping....staring at us with wide-open terrified eyes'.²³

Here the author had produced the exact condition of the abducted victim. The trauma through which she must be passing during that moment, who would certainly become 'speechless' and horrified, who cannot tell what just had passed through her. The only way by which she could speak was through her 'terrified eyes' after such a horrendous crime. This was a time when 'communal passions swept the whole Punjab community clean of all decency, morality and sense of human values'.²⁴

The refugee camps that being set up by the governments on both sides of the border were also in a shaggy state and the people were stocked in there like animals in such camps. The miserable conditions that prevailed in the refugee camps in Lyallpur, Chiniot, Lalian and Sargodha were narrated by Sardar Sampuran Singh Deputy High Commissioner of India in Pakistan in his report sent to Sardar Patel. He said that 'the story of the abduction of girls and women is very painful, in some cases they have been forcibly taken away in the presence of their helpless relatives. The Sargodha convoy was attacked near Lyallpur and ninety girls were abducted'.²⁵ The report sent by Mridula Sarabhai to Jawaharlal Nehru also provided a lot of information about the communal tension in Amritsar she said 'Amritsar will not quieten down until we have mixed staff in key posts. at present the Sikh and those who belong to Akali Dal only are appointed here. Feelings between Muslim and Sikhs are running so high that a Sikh officer is afraid to go to a Muslim locality even on duty'.²⁶

Numerous problems were being faced during the rehabilitation process, especially in the case of rehabilitation of women. Sometimes it was due to the lag in government functioning. The west Punjab government in Pakistan restricted the

movement of Indian troops and military transport in Rawalpindi district. When Miss Mridula Sarabhai along with other Congress Party leaders protested against it and asked to remove such restrictions as 2000 women were still trapped in Gujrat, Jhelum and Sialkot districts, Raja Ghazanfar Ali Khan categorically told them that 'a decision had already been taken on a ministry level that the Indian troops and the liaison officers should be withdrawn from Gujrat, Jhelum, Rawalpindi and Sialkot districts'.²⁷

At some instances, the difficulties came in the rehabilitation process due to rejection of abducted women by their own families. It was very clearly shown by the author in the novel *Ice-Candy-Man* in these lines:

'Hamida was kidnapped by the Sikhs...she was taken away to Amritsar. Once that happens, sometimes, the husband – or his family – won't take her back...they can't stand their women being touched by other men'.²⁸

To achieve maximum success in the rehabilitation of displaced women, Governments on both sides had started a collective effort in the restoration process of abducted women to their respective native places. In September 1947 the Prime Ministers of India and Pakistan met at Lahore and issued a joint declaration regarding rehabilitation that:

'Both the Central Governments and the Governments of East and West Punjab wish to make it clear that forced conversions and marriages will not be recognized. Further, that women and girls who have been abducted must be restored to their families, and every effort must be made by the government and their officers concerned to trace and recover such women and the process of recovery and rehabilitation remained active for almost nine years after the Partition. Initially, the recovery was good but in later years it slowed down. It was estimated that nearly 22,000 Muslim women were recovered from India in comparison to about 8,000 recovered Hindu and Sikh women from Pakistan side'.²⁹

The Ordinance related to Abducted Persons Recovery and Restoration was passed on January 31, 1949 that later was converted into Abducted Persons (Recover and Restoration) Act, 1949. It was declared by the government of India that the 'conversion' that took place after March 1st 1947 would be treated as forced and the concerned women would be sent to their respective Dominions.³⁰ Under this provision, the abducted women would have to be sent back whether she wanted to go back or not. There were certain instances when the abducted women wanted to stay with their abductors as they feared that their families would not accept them. One such case was reported in the newspaper where the father of abducted girl from Pakistan

wanted to bring back her daughter but 'the woman did not wish to leave her husband'.³¹

Many young girls that were recovered and rehabilitated in camps were found to be pregnant. At certain moments, such expecting women were forced to have abortions in an illegal manner. The children that were born to abducted women provided another challenge to the rehabilitation process. Such women were reluctant to move to another country leaving behind their new-borns and so, in 1954, both the governments of India and Pakistan reverted their earlier decision and made the consensus that the abducted persons could not be sent forcefully to other country.³² It was estimated that approximately 83,000 women were forcefully taken away from their families during Partition turmoil.³³ Nearly 20,728 abducted Muslims and 9,032 non-Muslims were recovered and restored from India and Pakistan till 15th August 1955.³⁴

To sum up, it can be said that the official records pertaining to violence against women did not fetch the complete picture about the miseries faced by the women during the Partition of Punjab. It is pointed out by Aanchal Malhotra that, 'there is still so much we do not know about Partition...its heaviness continues to weigh down – sometimes only subconsciously – both those who lived through it personally as well as those who have inherited fragmented stories and memories of it'.³⁵ Many untold aspects related to partition violence against women were elaborated by the 'Partition Literature'. It provides in depth vision into the psychosocial trauma of gender-based violence. The official history fails to perceive 'the myths about shame and honour, blood and belonging...For that one must turn to women histories which interrogate not only the history we know, but how we know it'.³⁶ Though the Governments from both sides had tried their best to safeguard the rights of women but the steps taken in this respect were far more less than adequate in comparison to the atrocities, maltreatment and social humiliation-both at the hands of 'Other' side as well as from their own families-experienced by the women during the Partition of Punjab. With the deep analysis of Partition Fiction and personal narratives of women, we can get into the 'trauma and upheaval of Partition', feel it and understand the gravity of the pain and agony of women during those turbulent times. Even today, we cannot say that India has emerged from stereotyped patricentric approach. Still, at some instances, we were encountered with the shameful acts of honour killings in certain parts of the country. There is a lot to be done to bring women to the forefront and to increase the involvement of women in the political sphere. It will be achieved when we envisage growth of women and nation together.

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Forts And Duars of Ahom Kingdom in Medieval Assam A perspective Study

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Abstract

It is intended to focus about the development of Forts and Duars (doors) under the Ahom administration in the medieval period have the good feedback during the time. In fact, Forts and Duars both is obverse and reverse of a coin had been brought a perception in economy, commercial and intellectual understanding by way of crossing neighbouring kingdoms during the time. Perhaps no states in India can provide with such a splendid system which carried uninterruptedly throughout between the principal places and ramifications which connected all the villages. The period there has a good deal of tribal elements for the perspective study. The first part of the topic will indicate the social relation and economic interdependence between the hills and the plains. Part second will show the infrequent references indicate such relations of symbiotic nature take place along the passes in the foot hills that were created in the numerous routes of plain areas against the coming down the hills peoples. Third will about hill tribal, normally, come down along the relatively large rivers to the plains and established a relation and go back after a sojourn. There are numerous passes are seemed in the Brahmaputra plains. In forth, how the Forts and Duars have been interacting with the plains people. In last part of Ahom rule in Assam have Western Duars in North Bengal and eastern Duars in Western Assam below Bhutan along with some new conclusions are to be drawn at the end.

Introduction

In the beginning of the 13th century A.D., the Ahoms first penetrated in to the southeastern corner of Assam from Burma. The Political condition of the Brahmaputra Valley was such that it encouraged an adventurous person to seek his

fortunes there. The glorious days of the ancient kingdom of Kamrupa had passed away and the country was divided into a number of small states most of which were ruled by tribal chiefs. Although the Ahoms came into contact with the hill tribes of the northern hill range in the first quarter of the sixteenth century, after the annexation of the Chutia kingdom, the history is silent about their relations for about next one hundred years till the reign of Pratap Singha, after occupation of the territory up to the Barnadi. For cordial relation with the inhabitants of these hill ranges the Ahom rulers adopted the system prevailed and gave it a definite shape which is afterwards termed as *posa*. One the term of the *posa* is that the hill tribes were allowed to come down once in a year through particular Duars and collected their necessary articles and go back after a sojourn. In return of this term the tribal chief with whom the *posa* was enacted had to render his allegiance through *pal-seva* to the Ahom ruler. The terms and conditions of the *posa* were strictly adhered to by the hill tribes as well as the Ahom government throughout their rule. Any deviation to these or any effort leading to the insecurity in the frontier was considered by the Ahom rulers an attempt of defines the allegiance and hence was controlled promptly. Due to lack of detailed account of the articles collected by the hill tribes we are in the dark in this respect during the Ahom rule. After coming of the Europeans the political proceeding (5th feb.1825), the Hazari Khowa were entitled to receive from each house of their allotted khels. As per the proceedings (11th August, 1834, No.5) from an account bearing date the 13th May 1825 it appears that the Daflas were entitled to receive, from every ten houses, one double cloth, one four seers of slat. The paiks of the Duphla Bahatia Khel or that section of the Assamese cultivators which had originally been partially assigned to the Daflas as responsible for their dues, being subject to this impost paid only Rs.3 instead of Rs.9 per ghot to Government, the balance being remitted to enable them to meet their engagements. The different clans of Daflas did not interfere with each other on the plains.

By raising the Daflagarh (eastern rampart), appointing the head of the garh, fixed pose to Miri and Dafla with assigned separate Duars (routes) to Abor, Miri and Dafla with land, bahata kakati and also fixed annual *pal-seva*). From this reference it is clear that each tribe mentioned had different Duars to contact with the plains, different prescribed areas to procure articles of their necessary, they had to render annual *pal-seva*. The tract with these Duars in Darang dist. (present Sonitpur dist) and Lakhimpur dist. Up to Dikrong was divided in to three division namely- charduar, Noduar and Chaiduar. The tract Charduar was between Rowta river and the Jia Bharali. The Duars here were along the passes created by the Rowta, Panchnai

and Belsiri were invariably used by the Monpa and Cherdukpen the inhabitants of present Tawang and western Kameng dists. Even today many of them come down through those routes to the markets of Majbat and Dhekiajuli. Some of them even used the eastern most duar of the tract i.e. Bhalukpung duar on Jia Bharali and reached Charduar, Balipara and Rangapara markets. However, this duar was more important for transport and communication of the Nishi (Dafla) and the Aka tribes with the plain. Robinson refers to a market place named Dymara visited by these people which was somewhere in this region (can not be identify now). The early British records also refer to the use of these passes by the chiefs of the different clans of Akas with their men and traded in Balipara, Lahabari, Orung and Tezpur markets. East of charduar lies that tract of Naduar, or nine Duars, between the Jia Bharali and the Behali-Kasujam. There nine passes were along the Bar Dikrai, Ghiladhari, Dhoni, Bengna, Bargang, Dikal, Jajia and Kasujan, as the tribes coming through these Duars were more interested in collecting annual pose from the prescribed plains men living in the foot hill region, there were no important market place in this region. However, there were references to their visited of such central places as Jamuguri, Chotia, Bishanath, dholi, etc. Naduar tract essentially visited by the Nisha (Dafla) tribe who were numerous in the adjoining hill tract up to Stream of Dikrong River.

The Objective of the Study

The main objectives of the study are—

1. To explore the reason why so many expeditions to medieval Assam.
2. To state about the validity and legitimacy of a state in case of secured process.
3. To focus on Forts architecture and Duars in economic and commercial perspectives
4. To highlight the Mughal expeditions in medieval Assam and its impact.

The scope of this article is to discuss Duars of the eastern most part which acted as routes of interacting between the tribes of Arunachal Pradesh and the plains people. In the following pages we show our interest in the Duars and the prescribed areas- their geographical location and the area they served. An attempt has also been made to identify the particular Duars used by the particular tribes. The tract between the river Burai (which is near Kasujan) and Dikrong was known as the Chaiduar, or six Duars. These six passes were created by the rivers namely Buri, Brahmajan, Balijan, Dubai, pichala (Marnai) and Dikrang duri, also known as Harmati dure lactated on the bank of Dikrang at the junction of the hills and the plains. Like the Naduar tract there was on fixed market places in this area, because the Nishis of this part now known as Eastern nishis, visited the plains more for collecting posa rather than for trade and commerce. There were important Duars

such as the dijo duar, visted by the apathanis (refers to as anku Miris by Colonel Deltan in 1854 AD and Dulungmukh on the river Subansiri visited by hill Miri or Ghasi Miri. even to the east of this, there were in Dhemiji dist., were passes along the present Likabali and Murkongeselek (Junai) used by the Garlongs and pasas of the adi family. These passes were also used by the tribes, named above, to collect their posa from the allotted areas and groups of paiks. However, whenever the Ahom administration became weak and posa was not delivered properly, there did occur occasional forces from the tribal side. It may be noted that in such times of weakened Ahom administration, for example at the times of Moamaria rebellions and Burmese invasions, there stayed hardly and Ahom officials to receive pal-sena. That the relation was mostly cordial and beneficial can further be vouchsafed from the fact that the Ahom rulers allotted Duars and land and people as mentioned earlier. Sometime, of course the atrocity could have occurred as result of find among the tribe themselves relating to their posa boundary and the material received.

But also from Tibet on the other hand the territories visited by Nishis, Akas, Apatanis, Hill Miris and Adis did not developed any hut, because these took away large quantities of commodities except ones they received by the way of posa. The study further reveals that the tribal were not significantly dependent on the plains men so far staple food stuffs are concerned, for nowhere has there be any mention of rice, pulses or such other food items in the lights of posa to be delivered to the tribal. The lists of posa include such things as garments of various description a few animals, iron products and salt. Unfortunately many scholars of historians seem to projects as if the tribals were dependent for food on the plains. The hill people were allowed to visit and collect posa between the months November to May i.e., harvesting season in the plains is not so much for the tribals to collect the harvest but this is the fair weather period and also the time when the plains men can weave the cloths and make other thinks ready for posa. Like all other part of India Assam also used to draw the attention of Delhi emperors right from the sultanate period. Muslim invasion to Assam started in 2005 AD with the Delhi sultanate aiming to gain control of the land and practically ended in 1671AD with the decline of Mughal Empire after Aurangzeb. This period of about 460 years so many important military expeditions can be traced from historical records sent against Assam. Indeed none of these attempts were successful because technique of war of Assamese people very high. From the defensive point of view they were constructed number of fort and fortification both upper and lower Assam to fight against invaders from the west and successfully repulsed them.

It is well known for her cultural heritage in the field of archaeology the existence of the immense number of ruined temples, vast tanks, enormous maidams and the once magnificent road river bunds testify to the rich historical attainments

of the past. For armed resistance a large number of Forts were erected at strategic centers of Ghoraghat (in Rangpur districts now in Bangladesh), Kamatapur, Jogighopa, North Guwahati, Singri and Chamdhara in the North Bank, and Lakhugarh, Kaliabor, Simalagarh, Kajalimukh and Pandu in the South Bank. All these were generally situated on the bank of the river or at the foot or by the side of a hill or hills and in most cases well-fortified. From their detailed description, the Ahom cities and Forts appear to be defended both by art and nature. They were actually strategic spots, intelligently fortified for defence purposes. They were best suited for the nature of the land and the warfare fought in those days. Basically they are hideouts, concealed from the sight of the invading enemy. A position of geographic vantage, adequate water supply, sufficient land to support the population inside, secret route for escape, direction of enemy's attack, and communication with major water route were the main consideration in building these Forts. These archaeological treasures are now rapidly perishing due to passage of the time, the frequent earthquakes, the heavy rains of the country, and the curse of ancient Indian masonry, the Pipal tree. Time is now ripe for salvage works and preservation by the competent authorities and in this context a critical study of the Fort Architectures of the medieval Assam may prove worth-while from the standpoint of historical perspective. There are many ruins and remains of Forts and embankments scattered all over the country which provide living testimony to the creative genius of the age.

Physical condition of Assam helped war planners and generals to make suitable arrangements for the defense of the country. It is enclaved by the Himalayan range of mountains, the mighty Brahmaputra flowing through its heart-land, forest made Assam an impregnable fort. In summer, 'the monsoon God' like 'Russian winter' always proved fatal to the enemy. In this physical condition *Garh* or Ramparts constructed with earth works were most suitable man made fortification for defensive purpose. The planning and usages of *Garh* was prevalent in Assam in pre-Ahom days. 'Remains of military fortifications like *Garh* and works of public utility, such as embankment, road and tanks belonging to pre-Ahom period are still in existence.' The Ahoms in medieval period followed same defense pattern. Either they repaired or constructed new *Garhs* according to their needs. The Ahoms with the expansion of their kingdoms; they had long and war with the Mahmadians. They had also conflict with the Koch kings for a sort period. All through the medieval period the Ahom kingdom was attacked from the western side with the enemies compelled them to construct defence net-work on different strategic points.

Jogighopa Fort

The Fort of Jogighopa (opposite Goalpara) was a high and large fort on the bank of the Brahmaputra. Near it there were dug many holes for the enemy horses to fall in to, and pointed pieces of bamboo (panjis) had been struck in the holes. Behind the holes, for about half a shot's distance, on even ground there was made a ditch, and behind this ditch, near the fort, another one where also there are pointed bamboos. It was always garrisoned with 3000 foot; other portion of the army was located at another fort Hirahpur on the other side of the Brahmaputra, whilst the fleet anchored between the two Forts.

Hajo Fort

Portuguese travelers inform that Hajo was also a strong fort. Outside there are three large courts, separated from each other by strong gates and surrounded by roomy verandas, which were well lit and which were crowded with people. The gates, which are guarded, are always closed. The two had a large number of soldiers, who served as a guard of the King, always attending there in strict order, being stationed according to each one's rank. They were so up to the mark and so well provided that one got the impression that they were a battle-field. This was followed by a large and beautiful garden, in the middle of which stood a well decorated villa. The Persian sources describe the Hajo fort under the Assamese thus, "nine strong Forts had been built by them (the Assamese) close to each other in such a way that heated elephants working without fear of oppositions or danger would not be able to make any impression on the wall of the Forts which were made entirely of logs of wood.

Saraighat Fort

It is bigger and higher than Fort Jogighopa and equal to the Fort Pandu. This fort was protected by a palisade of large logs of wood. In 1669 AD Lahit Barphukan had been making hurried preparation for resisting the advance of the Mughal under Ram Singh. He engaged the men under his command in the erection of palisades enclosing the fort of Saraighat or Srighat. The responsibility of the task was given to his own maternal uncle. To gain time, he started negotiation for peace with Ram Singh simultaneously. At the time of erection of fort of Saraighat he has be-headed his maternal uncle with his own hands for the neglect of his duties.

Pandu Fort

According to the Persian sources, the Pandu fort was adjacent to a hill having the biggest Hindu temple known in the names of Gomukhia Devi and Lona Chamari and Ismail Jogi. There were one thousand stone steps between the ground and the temples. Portuguese travelers inform us that Pandu was not a very large country but it was thickly populated. It did not extend far into the interior, but stretches along the beautiful river Brahmaputra.

Kajali Fort

Fort Kajali lies 7 K.M. from Fort Pandu was a strong-hold of some Zamburaks, matchlocks and gunpowder. It is near the 'Kajaliban' of ancient time and full of elephants.

Chamdihara Fort

It is situated on the bank of the Brahmaputra opposite to Fort Simalagarh. Beautiful gateway and immense amount of the fine carved stone work are visible on the spot even at present.

Simalagarh Fort

It lay between the Brahmaputra on the North and a range of hills on the south and was protected on the other two sides by walls with battlements on which numerous cannons were mounted. The inhabitants within were numerous. All their guns were manned. At the foot of the walls were a ditch and the customary holes with the 'panjis'. On the south side, the fort ends in a hill, as stated above, extending for four Kos. A 'nalah' extend from the south of the fort, touching the Southern bastion and from there flows westward. The army encamped on the bank of this 'nalah'. The Persian scholars describe the Assamese fort at Simalagarh thus, is a strong and sky-high fort. Those who inhabited it were safe from the stone throwing of the calamities of fortune and the catapults of the heaven. On both of the fort there were broad and high walls. On the south side these extended for four kos and ended at a hill which raised its head to the sky. On the North side the wall extended for three kos as far as the raging river, the Brahmaputra. Both walls were provided on the in-side with bastions and battlements and without there was a deep moat. Every place has been fortified with guns, badliji (a kind of cannon), and muskets, etc. In that area was nearly 3,00,000 warlike Assamese ready to resist. Mir Jumla, established a battery opposite the largest bastion and fighting went on inside and outside.

Garghgaon Fort

The fort at Garhgaon on the bank of the river Dikhou was also the capital town of Assam for a long time. It had four gates built of stone and mortar, the distance of each of which from the palace of the king was three kos. A high and wide embankment, very strong, has been made for the traffic. Around the fort city, there was a circular bush of bamboos in place of the wall, two kos or more in width. Remains of brickwork some three hundred yards from the palace lead to the conclusion that there might have been a brick wall surrounding it at distance. Round the king's house an embankment has been made and strong bamboos have been

planted on it close together to work as a wall. Round it a moat has been dug which is deeper than a man's height in most places and is always full of water.

Conclusion

Over and above, it can be found to reiterate the style and designs of the Forts of medieval Assam are of immense interest to the students of Assam history. The sites are well worthy of visit by some competent antiquarian, to rescue from oblivion archaeological treasures that are now rapidly perishing from neglect and willful destruction. This would also amply repay the time and labour spent upon a thorough investigation. Thus the rich tradition of architecture prevailing in ancient Assam monuments, although may be, with some local variations. The excavation work at Sibsagar, Kaliabor, Dimapur, Maibang, Khaspur, Jogighopa and Kamatapur is of vital necessity to find out many more rare objects which are expected to fill up the missing links of medieval Assam military history. All these are to be preserved applying to them all the technique and methodology which have been developed in the subject of scientific preservation of archaeological ruins.

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Mobilising the marginalised section during Quit India Movement A case of Eastern Uttar Pradesh

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Abstract

Gandhi ji launched three mass movements during freedom movement in India. The most important was the Quit India Movement of 1942. This was most powerful mass movement in twentieth century India. During this movement British administration ceased to exist in most part of India in general and Eastern U.P. in particular. Mass mobilization took place not only through the initiative of elite, urban politicians, but often through that of aggrieved and oppressed peasants, workers, youths, women and other sections of the society. This paper deals with the mass participation of marginalised sections of society such as women, dalit, lower castes and muslim during Quit India movement in Eastern U.P.

Background of Eastern U.P. during National Movement

The 'Quit India' movement of 1942 was the most powerful mass movement in late colonial India. Its importance lay not only in its reflecting the climax of the anti-British struggle but also in its vision for the future. It was characterized by its broad popular participation as well as by certain currents which questioned the internal contradictions within Indian society. The movement commenced with the adoption of a resolution by the All India Congress Committee on 8th August 1942, at the Gowalia Tank Maidan (Bombay), asking the British government to withdraw from India, in order also to ensure the material and cultural development of Indian as a free people, and in order also to ensure their participation in the struggle against fascism. On the refusal of the British authorities to 'Quit India', so as to speak, Mahatma Gandhi invited his countrymen to 'do or die' in a bid to liberate themselves from the alien yoke. Gandhi's speech also contained specific instructions for different sections of the people. What followed the Mahatma's call for action was a massive uprising, in the course of which British rule collapsed over large parts of the country,

especially in the Ganga Valley. National government functioned at Tamluk in Medinapur (Bengal), Satara in Maharashtra, Talchar in Orissa, Ballia in UP etc. In this context the observation of the Viceroy Lord Linlithgow speaks itself the gravity and intensity of the movement, I am engaged here, wrote the viceroy on 31st August 1942 to the Prime Minister Winston Churchill, 'in meeting by far the most serious rebellion since that of 1857, the gravity and extent of which we have so far concealed from the world for reasons of military security'.

For the first six or seven weeks after 9th August, there was a tremendous mass upsurge all over the country. People devised a variety of ways of expressing their anger on the arrest of national leaders. In some places, huge crowds attacked Police Stations, Post-Offices, Kutcheris (Courts), Railway Stations and other symbols of government authorities. National flags were forcibly hoisted on public buildings in defiance of the police. The reaction to the arrests made on 9th August 1942, was most intense in eastern U.P. where peoples movement attained the proportions of a rebellion. When people cutting across different strata participate in a movement, we call it a mass movement. A movement acquires a mass character only when it expresses the creative genius and energies of the people. Eastern U.P. seemed to be a good choice for this research because people of this area are extremely proud of their nationalist past. Mangal Pandey, the sepoy who started the mutiny, belonged to this area only. Babu Kunwar Singh one of the strongest adversaries of the British in 1857, although he came from, neighbouring Shahabad, frequently camped here in the course of his campaigns. Eastern U.P. had been a major centre of political revolt since 1857. Simmering discontent had been kept alive by EKA movement and the Kisan Sabha. Owing to the existence of small land holdings, a powerful middle peasantry a significant group of professional class fed by the B.H.U., supply of labour from this area to industrial areas, Eastern U.P. has been in the map of northern India's political history throughout the twentieth century. Because of economic backwardness and administrative apathy, political parties of every shade found in the area a fertile region for intensive propaganda. The congress, the C.S.P., the Hindustan Socialist Republican Army, the Communist etc. were active in this area cutting across the class and the caste barriers. This area has been most important centre of culture, politics, economy, education, and national movement. Benares in eastern U.P. has been pilgrimage centre attracting crores of people from all over India. These people interacted with local masses in a big way. Eastern UP was also

marked by Sanskrit, Hindi, literary identity and modern progressive thought. Writing of Premchand, Mahadevi Verma and others were disseminating the mechanism of working of colonial economy among the masses of UP. The writings in Aaj, Sangharsh, Hind Kesari, Ranbheri, Ranbigul, The Daily Sansar, Hans, Karmbhoomi, Godan, and others were popular among the masses. These literature mobilized the masses for the national movement. The districts of old Banaras division and Azamgarh were distinguished in 1942 by the remoteness, economic backwardness, density of population and a fairly lively political consciousness. Together, they formed the storm-centre of the 1942 agitation in Eastern U.P.

Women of the Region in the Movement

With the emergence of Mahatma Gandhi, the social base of national movement widened. Now, one can see the participation of women on a large scale as expected by Mahatma Gandhi. Annie Besant, Sarojini Naidu and Nellie Sen Gupta were important women faces of the Congress movement at National level. With the coming of Gandhi, women activities in national movement got a fillip. They were now seen as participants in demonstrations, satyagrahis, and boycotts organizers. Women were now encouraged to be more active in the constructive programme. They were to be the moral force in the movement by staying away from the struggle for power and by transforming people's hearts through their quiet, non-violent struggle.¹

In U.P. Swarup Rani Nehru, Vijaya Lakshmi Pandit, Sucheta Kripalini, Hajra Begum, (one of the first Indian members of the communist party of Great Britain), Purnima Banerji (sister of Aruna Asaf Ali), Rameshwari Nehru, Uma Nehru, Kamala Nehru and others were very active during freedom struggle. Educational institution like Benares Hindu University, Kashi Vidyapeeth, Sevashram and Kanya Pathshala in Benares region and Allahabad University and Prayag Mahila Vidhyapeeth Played a vital role in rousing political consciousness among the women folk in Eastern UP. Here the focus will be mainly on the activities done by women during Quit India movement in Eastern U.P. Srimati Gouri Devi, Srimati Kishori Devi, Srimati Lakshmi, Srimati Sajjan Devi Mahnot, Srimati Seva Mitra and Srimati Giribala Devi were prominent women faces of Benares during the national uprising.² In Sonarpura area of Benares when mounted British soldiers arrived to repress the people's movement, then Giribala came forward to stop them by shouting sarcastically.³ *Hamar shil, Hmar Lora, Hamar Bhangedar, Dant ka gora*[My grinding slab, my Muller, O! Whiteman, with that you break my teeth].

In the beginning of the movement girl students took Khadi bhandar under their possession in Benares. Previously it had been occupied by the police. The

police tried to resist the girls but failed.⁴ On 12th August 1942, a delegation from the Benares Hindu University visited Allahabad University. Immediately afterwards a well-planned attack was made on Kotwali, Kutchery and other district offices. In all these activities girl students were at the forefront.⁵ While taking part in small children procession at Allahabad, Mrs. Indira Gandhi and Firoz Gandhi were arrested. Mrs. Indira Gandhi lay inside three rings formed by small boys and women. On being taken up by the British forces she struggled and caused a considerable fuss. This was the time when following slogans were raised in Eastern U.P.:⁶ 'From the jails comes the cry, up with the revolution' and 'the police are our brothers'. You brutes, the English, 'Quit India', and John Bull quit India.

On 15th August 1942, following prominent women leaders of India, issued a 'public statement' criticizing the repressive policy of colonial government and appealing to the women of India to take active part in the peoples movement. In this context, the few are notable to be mentioned Sd/-Rajkumari Amrit Kaur, Patron, All-India Women's Conference, Mrs. M.E. Cousins, Patron, A.I.W.C., Shrimati Rameshwari Nehru, Patron, A.I.W.C., Shrimati Kamaladevi, Vice-President, A.I.W.C., Mrs Asaf Ali, Vice-President, A.I.W.C., Mrs. Hansa Mehta, Member, Franchise & Citizenship, A.I.W.C. Shrimati Ammun Swaminathan, Vice President, A.I.W.C., Mrs. Shardaben Mehta, Standing Committee Member, A.I.W.C, Mrs Urmila Mehta, Mrs. Jaishri Raiji and Mrs. Kusum Sayani, St. Committee Member, A.I.W.C.⁷ Some parts of the statement is found in 15-8-1942, 'we wish to enter our emphatic protest against uncivilized methods which the provincial governments have employed in their attempts to suppress popular demonstrations. All over the country the police and military authorities have fired indiscriminately on unarmed crowds of men and women, dispersed them by teargas attacks or lathi charges resulting in bloodshed and acute physical suffering and thereby filled every Indian heart with deep resentment. Such repression has resulted in an outburst of public wrath causing destruction of property. By isolating Mahatma Gandhi and other members of the working committee and refusing them the privilege usually enjoyed by political prisoners of their status, we feel the government behaving in an unjustifiably arbitrary manner. Such behaviour can only increase the bitter feelings of the people We fervently hope that every important section of the people will exert its influence to force the government to adopt civilized methods of setting the problem of India's political demand. In particular, we urge the women of India to exert their energies towards this end'.⁸

In Benares and in Allahabad, the students created a difficult situation, for the administration. Women students under the leadership of Kumari Snehlata hoisted the national flag on Benares Kutchery (court).⁹ In Benares particularly almost all telegraph and telephone wires in the city were cut and all communication with outside places has ceased. Early morning on 19th August, the Benares Hindu University was taken over by the government forces. It was taken over with a stiff opposition especially from the women hostellers.¹⁰

There was no through running of the trains on the main line between Benares and Lucknow Via Jhanganj. Women leadership was at peak when Jhanganj station was looted and burnt by the crowd led by a girl.¹¹ Damage between Benares and Partapgarh had been extensive. In spite of the brutal repressive measure of the government six women attempted a procession in Benares in the month of December, 1942.¹²

The bravery manifested by the sister-in-law of Shri Algu Rai Shastri at Amila in Azamgarh region was remarkable. The valour and courage shown by her, brought glory to the entire womanhood during Quit India movement. When British repression started in Eastern UP, some soldiers broke into the house, collected the entire paraphernalia, heaped it in the court-yard and were about to set fire to it when the lady rushed forward, jumped on the heap and roaring like a lioness said: 'Burn me first and then the appendages'. The white soldiers were startled and were completely unnerved on hearing such brave words. They could not even touch what they had collected. Even then some of them tried to decamp with some of the articles. She could not tolerate the open loot. She leapt forward and recovered all the articles. Thus overpowered, the soldiers went off with their heads hung down with shame.¹³

Processions were taken out to protest against the British repressive policy in Ghazipur, Ballia and in Meerut in the last week of September. At least 515 people were arrested. Out of 80 students who were arrested in Meerut, 61 were girls.¹⁴ When Kesho Dev Malviya, one of the Chief congress organizers of UP and Dr. Gairola of Benares were arrested then protest March were taken out through out the provinces. While protesting their arrest 51 girls were arrested in Cownpore.¹⁵ In spite of colonial repressions, people's movement continued till they achieved the freedom. At the national level, no one can deny the heroic role played by Mrs. Aruna Asaf Ali and Usha Mehta. Secret intelligence reports show that role of female element was very strong at the provincial level also.¹⁶

Lower caste and dalit

Eastern UP is represented by almost all the caste found in North India. Lower castes formed the bulk of the population. Lower caste of people along with

Rajput, Brahmin and Bhumihar took active part in Quit India movement in Benares, Ghazipur, and Azamgarh. They took part in the movement as congress volunteers.¹⁷ Gandhian textile labour associations which, was employing mainly Harijans went on strike to take part in Quit India movement, in spite of government threat of cancellation of contract.¹⁸

In Benares regions Sri Nirohu Bhar, Sri Ram, Sri Chauthi Noniya, Sri Pancham Ram and Sri Phakere became victims of police firing during the Quit India movement. Sri Maikhoo Lohar, Sri Ram Charitra Koiri, Sri Saryu Sonar, Sri Ramnath Koiri, Sir Nifikir Ahir, Sir Bandhan Ahir, Sir Ram Prasad Mallah and Sri Khedubin got a deterrent term of imprisonment for life for effectively contributing to the activities connected with the 'Quit India' movement. Sri Sita Ram and Sri Bhaggu Koeri got injured due to police firing.¹⁹ Besides these Sri Baldeo Singh Yadav, Sri Baran Teli, Sri Chhiganu Chamar, Sir Bhagnath Koeri, Sri Jagrup Dusadh, Sri Kanhaiya Lal Viswakarma, Sri Lotwan Bind, Sri Parloo Teli and many others lower caste peoples contributed in Quit India movement and went to jail several times.²⁰

British officials believed that in Ghazipur regions local Ahir castes were involved in most of the sabotage activities during the movement.²¹ On 15th August, Ghauspur aerodrome was attacked by the crowd. The principal accused in this case were Chandra Deo Ahir, Nathu Ahir, Tarjan Ahir, Mahanand Rai, Vindhyachal Rai, Ramsurat Rai, Ram Parshad, Badri Rai, Ram Brichch Kandou, Anand Lal, Shyam Narain Rai and Hari Sunder Kandou exhibiting a combination of different caste and class groups.²² In Bardah Thana Lal Chand, Mangal, Barmi Pasi, Nanhu Pasi, Ramdhari Pasi, Kushia Pasi and Pattu Pasi were jointly charged with an attempt to damage a culvert in the village Bijauli on the night of 18-19 August.²³ In Sherpur-Mohammadabad areas also there was active participation from the lower caste and class people in the movement. Sri Khedan Ahir, Sri Ram Naresh Singh Yadava, Sri Mannu Singh Yadav, Sri Baijnath Khatik, Sri Balram Prasad Chaurasia, Sri Baran Aheer, Sri Budha Bind, Sir Hukum Aheer, Sri Jagmal Ram, Sri Jangi Bhar, Sri Khanoo Ram Bind, Sri Laggan Teli, Sri Nankoo Bind, Sri Shiv Nandan Bhar, Sri Shiv Nath Bhar, Sri Sukhu Chamar, Sri Udai Aheer and many other freedom fighter from the social exclusive group participated in the movement.

Azamgarh has a sizeable number of low caste people. Harijan Gurukul Gandhi Gram institution was actively working for the upliftment of the Harijan. In this process they also got national consciousness. Whole institution was destroyed and reduces to ashes during Quit India movement.²⁴ The revolutionary uproar in

Azamgarh, which is largely an agricultural district exhibited a remarkable example of organized popular wrath against imperialism there were many occasions of mass action lasting for days, defying the presence of armed colonial forces. It is in this context that the operations in Madhuban, Indara Junction, Mau, Tarwa, Kajha, Pipridih and Phulpur stand out prominently in the historic struggle with all the attendant attributes.²⁵ Out of these Madhuban, Tarwa and Kajha were the most massive demonstration in Azamgarh during the movement. They followed a build-up several days and large parties came in from all directions to join in these demonstrations.²⁶ A wide spectrum of the rural castes and classes were represented in the demonstrations. The list of those killed in Madhuban police firing is like a mini-directory of castes living in Eastern U.P. of the 15 nationalists who died here, two were Brahmans, two Rajputs, one Ahir, one Koeri, one Kandu, one Bhar, one Majhi, one Lonia, one Garriya, one Darzi (a muslim), one Harijan and two unidentified.²⁷ Most of them are form the Subaltern section of the society. Jail and police records are important sources for the identification of participants in any event. Following provides a caste wise distribution of those who were convicted for their part in Madhuban, Tarwa and Kajha incidents.

Caste-wise distribution of convicts

Caste	Madhuban	Tarwa	Kajha
Rajput	10	31	31
Brahman	17	10	8
Bhumihar	1	-	-
Bania	3	2	-
Ahir	9	16	1
Koeri	5	-	5
Mal	5	-	-
Kahar	-	-	3
Lonia	7	-	2
Majhi	5	-	-
Teli	5	1	-
Bhar	5	9	-
Kandu	2	-	1
Barnwal	-	2	-
Harijan	4	1	-
Muslim	2	-	-
Others	14	3	2
Total	94	75	54

Source: This table is based on the basis of Phulbadan Singh, *Azamgarh Swadhinata Sangram*, Bhag 2, Gyanendra Pandey (ed.), *op. cit.*, p.150.

Besides these Dukhi Katua, Buddhu Bhar, Sannu Dhobi, Abhilakh Kewat, Kamla Prasad Vishvakarma, Kunju Kahar, Kodai Kewat, Kangal Ram, Gopi Koeri, Nanku Pasi, Paltu Pasi, Bande Pasi, Mohan Koeri, Mohan Harijan, Mangal Pasi, Vishwanath Arya, Snal Bhar, and many others lower castes people strengthened the movement.²⁸

Muslim Participation

Gandhi devoted the bulk of his speech after the passage of the 'Quit India' resolution to a discussion of Hindu-Muslim relation. It was the question which was uppermost in his heart. To him it was a matter of life and death. According to him, 'India is without doubt the homeland of all Mussalman inhabiting this country. Every Mussalman should therefore cooperate in the fight for India's freedom... If we Hindus and Mussalman means to achieve a heart unity... we must first unite in the effort to be free from the shackles of this empire'. Churchill and Jinnah tried to keep Muslim masses away from the Quit India movement they couldn't get success.²⁹ Prior to the meeting of working committee of the All India Muslim League which was to be held on 16th August 1942 in Bombay, Jinnah appealed to the Muslims to keep completely aloof from the Quit India Movement.³⁰ Muslim community and organization of Eastern UP which believes in composite and secular society came forward to take part in Quit India movement. The participation of lower class Muslim was very prominent.³¹ Jamat-ul-ulema had declared its entire support for the freedom movement. Thousand of Muslims got martyrs in the cause of India's freedom.³² This organization warned Churchill and Amery that Muslim of India would not forgive them for insulting Indian Muslims by speaking a lie that they were against the freedom movement.³³ By hiding the reality R.F. Mudie (Chief secretary to Government, United Provinces) wrote to Sir Richard Tottenham (Secretary to the Government of India, Home department, New Delhi) that, 'the attitude of Muslims continues to be neutral, though there are signs that their neutrality may become more benevolent. In Azamgarh, pro-congress posters emanating from the Jamiat-ul-ulema were countered by a Muslim League poster and in Lucknow some members of the League are said to resent the Leagues' policy'.³⁴ Many times government officials tried to prove that those Muslim who were taking part in the movement in Eastern UP, were none other than communists.³⁵

In Benares and Azamgarh there are many weaving centres where lower castes Muslims family works. They wholeheartedly supported the movement by going on strikes whenever demanded by the national and regional leaders. The All-India Momin Conference the Chief association of the large body of Muslim weavers stayed on the congress side all the way up to independence. Throughout the movement, both the community (Hindu and Muslim) maintained a healthy atmosphere. The government on the other hand had expected communal trouble.³⁶ The government officials tried hard to widen the gulf between the two communities

by a policy of community fining and calling it 'collective fining'. The correspondent of the *New York Times* reported after a survey of the movement that throughout the nation there was a firm determination to avoid communal strike in connection with the independence movement. There was not a single case of communal strife in and revolutionaries everywhere showed respect to Muslim sentiments and vice versa.³⁷ The argument that the Muslims did not take part in the 'open rebellion' of 1942 is so misleading that it needs to be contradicted in the light of baffling attitude adopted by the leadership. The truth is that Muslims like other communities of India did play a prominent part in 1942.³⁸

Besides national Muslim leaders, Professor U. A. Asrani, Sri Niyamullah, Sri Ahmad, Sri Alamgir Khan, Sri Alijan, Sri Alim Khan, Sri Alir Jama, Sri fulman khan, Sri Furat, Sri Marhoom, Sri Roshan, Sri Suleman Khan, Sri Vajiv Ali, Sri Wali Muhammad, Haneef Darji, Shamshul Shah Fakir, Abdul Huq, Muhamamd Sattar, Muhammad Shah Daftari, Muhammad Shafi Khan, Muhammad Haneef and Samsher Ahmad were prominent Muslim faces in Eastern UP who with their followers took active part to strengthen the Quit India Movement.³⁹

Conclusion

The People in Eastern U.P. responded in mass activities by attacking the symbol of imperialism such as: district administrative offices, tehsil building, land record offices, patwari, pro-British zamindar, court, post offices, court of ward camp, civil area, liquor shops, police stations, communication lines and other symbols of colonial government. These were seen as symbol of exploitation. So they wanted to dismantle it. People cutting across different strata participated in national spirit. Besides political parties women, dalit, lower castes and muslim participated in the movement. Gender, Caste and religion distinction blurred during this movement. Anti-British struggle became principal contradiction in the Quit India conjecture. All the internal contradiction blurred and submerged under the principal contradiction with British imperialism. All section of society acted as an agency against the British. Indian society acted as an collective unit in Eastern U.P. Massive people's participation made Quit India as the greatest mass upheaval since 1857. Every section came forward to form a single front to make national movements a Holistic one. The element bidding all of them was the ideology of nationalism and age long community affinity. Stephen Henningham failed to see this and he called the movement as 'the Dual Revolt'.⁴⁰ On the other hand Max Harcourt identified the movement with the Kisan only. The movement drew in a broad spectrum of the population giving it a composite and holistic look. British administrative system had suppressed women, dalit, lower castes and muslims. The mass movement of 1942 in Eastern U.P. had an adverse impact on the British administration and arouse

fear and anxiety in the mind of Britishers in India. This fear forced them to leave India by 1947.

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Role of Marudhu Brothers in the South Indian Rebellion

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Abstract

In South India many rulers fought against the British dominance. In the beginning of the 19th century the South Indian Rebellion (1800-1801) represented a violent reaction against the surrender of the rulers to the British and loss of freedom. As a result South Indian leaders strongly opposed the British government. The earliest leaders of the rebellion against the British imperialism were the Marudhu brothers of Sivagangai of Tamil Nadu. Their unflinching faith in nationalism and commitment to liberation of the country is a matter of great significance. They were the first rulers from South India had planned to war with the British Empire for the India's independent. They were popularly known for fight against East India Company and they were finally hanged by the British after a prolonged struggle. In the light of this background, a humble attempt has been drawn to look into the role Marudhu brothers in the south Indian rebellion on the basis of available sources here and there.

The South Indian Rebellion of 1800-1801 represented a violent reaction against the surrender of the rulers to the British and loss of freedom. As a result of diplomacy intimidation and wars, the aliens established their sway over the land. The horrors that attended the growth of imperialism spread a wave of revulsion and led the inhabitants to united action. The outbreak of the Rebellion marked the climax of a determined endeavour, made by the common people of South India to liberate the Peninsula of Jambu Dweepa from British. Marudhu Pandyan of Sivaganga, Gopala Nayak of Dindigul, Khan-i-jah Khan of Coimbatore, Keralavarma of Malabar, Krishnappa Nayak of Mysore and Dhondaji Waug of Maharastra, who organized a formidable confederacy, for the overthrow of British rule appear headed the movement.¹

The earliest leaders of the rebellion against the British, Marudhu brothers commands the most important place for several reasons. Due to the nationalist and anti-British fervour of the Marudhu brothers, the Carnatic politics which centred round Arcot and Tirunelveli, was shifted to Ramanathapuram. Their unflinching faith in nationalism and commitment to liberation of the country is a matter of great historical significance. They transcended the barriers of parochialism for a national cause, a worthy model to the people of the present day. Their sacrifices give new strength and vigour for the promotion of patriotism among the people in times of the threat to the nation.²

Born in obscurity, Marudhu Pandyan or Chinna Marudhu was a man of handsome personality and affable manners. He entered the royal palace of Sivagangai as a betel bearer while his elder brother Periya Marudhu as a dog keeper. The younger brother excelled the elder brother in all activities. They loved each other. For a while, Sivagangai was captured by the combined forces of the Nawab of Arcot and the British in 1772.³ The young Marudhu engaged himself in organizing a popular movement against the intruders. He succeeded even in reinstating Velu Nachiar as the ruler of Sivagangai and a thanks giving measure he was appointed as a minister. By his dint of ability, in the passage of time, he gained tremendous influence over the mass and emerged as a hero at Siruvayal. Realising his reputation and appreciating his loyalty the queen at last passed on the sovereignty of the country to the twin brothers in 1780.⁴

Chinna Marudhu turned the sentiments of the people against the aliens by his fiery, thought-provoking and meaningful speeches. The only and final remedial measure he suggested was the destruction of the political power of the British and their agents by strengthening the unity among the native Indian powers. While doing so, he believed that the entire country would be liberated, the native rule can be restored and above all unity and harmony among different people can be achieved.⁵ To realize his broad national vision, he planned for the formation of a league with the like minded anti-British leaders drawn particularly from South India.

As the British considered Marudhu Pandyan as a major enemy for their colonial design next to Tipu Sultan in South India, they also sought all sorts of means and ways to crush him. In their bid, at first they signed the Carnatic Treaty on 12th July, 1792 with Mohammed Ali, the Nawab of Arcot. By that, the Nawab was reduced to titular head and the British got the right to collect over the Sivagangai. After getting land right, between 1795 and 1799 the British wanted to bring the administration of Sivagangai under their control.⁶ Jackson was posted for this adhoc

purpose as the Collector of Southern Poligars Ramanathapuram was made his headquarters, for it was considered the center of rebel activities.⁷

Kattabomman, the Poligar of Panchalamkurichi, who rebelled against the British used to meet Marudhu brothers to seek advice and help in times of crisis. Even after the execution of Kattabomman by the British, Marudhu brothers continued to be sympathetic towards the brothers of the former. To resist the tyrannical and oppressive rule of the British in Tirunelveli, and to release Oomathurai, the brother of Kattabomman, from imprisonment, the adherents of Kattabomman sought help and co-operation from Marudhu Pandyas. Marudhu Pandyan sent his brave men to Tirunelveli and engineered schemes to work out the escape of the relatives of Kattabomman, especially Oomathurai, imprisoned at Palayamkottai. This was effected on 2nd February, 1801.⁸

For a while, the revolutionaries shouted slogans like. 'Let Veerapandyan's (Kattabomman) fame flourish and grow. Down with the white man's Imperialism. After the successful evacuation of the rebels from the prison, Marudhu Pandyan sent 30,000 men to Tirunelveli to render help to Oomathurai and Sevathiah. As a consequence, the insurrections spread over and the British garrisons were attacked and subdued. Yet, the British pursued the revolutionaries and came to know that Oomathurai was in the custody of Marudhu brothers. Immediately afterwards, their anger turned against Marudhu brothers and warned them to surrender along with Oomathurai. Marudhu Pandyan simply ignored the ultimatum and prepared for the final battle against the British.⁹

Before commencing military operations, the British wanted to reduce the popularity of Marudhu brothers amongst the people. The British made a diplomatic proclamation to the people of Sivagangai. It stated that the Marudhu brothers were selfish and were ruling the region ruthlessly against the interest of the people. Therefore, the people should relinquish them and surrender their arms, and should be loyal to the British and their representatives in Sivagangai. This proclamation clearly showed that the British by following their imperial divide and rule policy determined to prevent the people from supporting the cause of Marudhu brothers. As a retaliatory measure, Marudhu Pandyan declared two proclamations of far reaching social and national importance.¹⁰ One of the copies of it was pasted in the fort of Tiruchirapalli. It was addressed to the people of South India, mentioning as the Peninsula of Jambu Dweepa. Another proclamation with identical contents mostly, was found on the wall of great temple of Srirangam. It was addressed to all the inhabitants of India, referring as the island of Jambu.¹¹

Indeed the twin proclamations of Marudhu Pandyan have got revolutionary overtones in terms of social and national implication. They are memorable documents for the lovers of nationalism. The proclamations encompassed liberative ideals and integrative spirit of a great patriot, hailing from the masses. His all India proclamation showed his anxiety and commitment to the freedom of his mother country. The proclamations expressed deep concern that if the political melody was allowed to persist, the whole of India would fall under alien rule. It exhorted all religious and communal sections whether they were peasants, sepoys or civil servants, to rally to the national cause. It illustrated the folly of the Nawab of Carnatic, the indifference of the inhabitants, diplomacy of the British and adverse consequences of imperialism.¹²

The proclamations of Marudhu Pandyan and the allegation of British led the situation to the brink of a bloody conflict. In May, 1801 the freedom fighters under the command of Marudhu Pandyan encountered the British. They drove away the British forces at Tirupathur and Natham. In July Oomathurai, the ally of Marudhupandyan commanded his followers in Madurai and captured it. In July 1801, the insurrection spread to Kaveri basin. Shevatta Thambi, the son of Marudhu Pandyan advanced to Thanjavur.¹³ The rebels expelled the British troops from Pudukkottai. Afterwards, they moved to Sirkali, Kumbakonam and Wodayyarpalayam. In the beginning of the struggle, thus the patriots gained resounding victory and by that gain the places of Madurai, Ramanathapuram, Kallarnadu and Thanjavur came under the control of Marudhu Pandyan.

The continuous victories of Marudhu Pandyan threatened the position of the British. The Madras Government ordered for the mobilization of all the British forces towards Sivagangai. The end of Tipu Sultan at Srirangapatnam and execution of Kattabomman at Panchalamkurichi, helped the British troops to divert their consolidated attention towards Sivagangai. Lt. Col. Agnew was put in charge of over all military operations against Marudhu Pandyan. Advancing from the South, the British forces occupied Palamaneri, Tiruppuvanarn, Tirupachetti and Manamadurai. Col. Innes attacked Piranmalai, and Sarurusamharakottai situated near Tirupathur. Commanded by Blackburn, the British occupied the rebel posts at Thanjavur and advanced to Arandangi and Pudukkottai. Col. Macaulay defeated the rebels of Tirunelveli and reached Ramanathapuram. Thus the British surrounded the patriots of Sivagangai from all over the sides.¹⁴ Thereupon, since July 27, 1801, the British started their final concerted military operation. The combined forces of Agnew and Innes marched towards Siruvayal.

The patriots resisted the mighty British forces by setting fire to Siruvayal. As a result, through an alternative way on 30th September, 1801, the British detachments moved to Kalayarkoil. After a sharp fire, the Kalayarkoil fell. On the

19th October, 1801, Marudhu Pandyan along with his brother Vellai Marudhu engaged in an encounter against British at Cholapuram, Both of them were wounded and captured. On 24th October, 1801, Marudhu Pandyan, together with his brother Vella Marudhu and a horde of other patriots, were executed on the ruins of the Fort of Tirupathur.¹⁵ The followers of Marudhu Pandyan carried his body to Kalayarkoil, buried it near the ran of great temple and erected a small tomb in his memory.¹⁶

The end of Marudhu Pandyan did not mark the end of the liberation-mission he espoused, but laid the foundations for a more formidable national movement to emerge. Marudu Pandyan with limited native forces valiantly fought his final battle against the disciplined and well-equipped British army for six months. Like the other early patriots he also failed to attain his objective of liberation of mother-India from the clutches of the British. Yet, he worked for unity among the Indians against the foreign rule.

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Demographic Changes in Assam Responsibility of the British Government

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Abstract

The British rule brought a significant change to the political, social and economic life of the people Assam. After acquiring the political power of the state, they tried all possible means to exploit the resources of Assam. Development of tea plantation significantly changes the economy and demographic pattern of the state. On the other hand, discovery of oil, coal and construction of railway line facilitated the importation of labourers from outside the province. The British government also favoured the importation of landless peasants from East Bengal (Bangladesh) to cultivate in the extensive wastelands and jungles. During the rule Saadullah Ministry large number of Muslim immigrants entered into Assam. The high growth rate of population in colonial Assam became one of the most alarming issues for the indigenous people of Assam.

Introduction

Immigration of population from one place to another is not a new phenomenon. It had been taken place due to various factors in different parts of the world. Migration can be regarded as an important part of human history. Various human races from pre-historic onwards had started moving from their origin homeland either to improve their economic status or to live where they feel socially, culturally and economically more independent.¹ At present population explosion in one of the burning problems of Assam. The population growth in Assam is tremendously higher than the other states of India. So, there arise a question whether the growth is due to high birth rate or there is an another factor behind it. It is important to note that the high growth rate of population in Assam is not due to high birth rate but due to unabated influx of outsiders specially (Bangladeshis) into Assam.

Geographically, Assam is situated in the Northeast of India. It shares common international boundary with Nepal, Bangladesh, and Bhutan. It is connected to the mainland of India by a narrow patch of land measuring 18 k.m on the western side. She is a mini India with different national ethnic, religious, linguistic and tribal groups living together in the region for centuries. The population of Assam is a broad intermixture of Mongolian, Indo-Iranian, Indo-Burmese or Aryan races. The population by and large speaks Assamese. The Karbi and Dimasas of Karbi-Anglong and North Cachar hills also have their own dialects and culture and they do not identify wholly with the Assamese nationality. There is also a mixed tea garden population composed of people originally speaking Hindi, Santhali, Mundari, Oriya language or dialect.²

In this paper an attempt has been made to analyses how far the British Government was responsible for the demographic changes of Assam during the 19th and in the first half of the 20th century. It also tries to examine different stages of immigration that had been taken place during the British rule. The methodology of the paper is descriptive. For the paper mainly richly secondary source materials have been consulted to achieve in the objectives.

The entry of outsiders into Assam is not a new concept. It is very difficult to say who actually constitute the indigenous population. For almost all groups living here seem to have come to the region from different places at different point of time.. It was exactly in the Tai Shan family came from Burma across the Patkai range and entered Assam under their leader Sukapha. The Ahoms subdued various local races such as Barahi, Moran, Chutia, Kirat/Kachari (now-Bodos) etc. The Ahoms were able to form a composite Assamese culture through the process of assimilation. They made Assamese one of the powerful races in India. So, it is seen that throughout history people of different stocks have been migrating into this land and merged into a common harmonious whole in a process of assimilation. The Ahoms encouraged the outsiders to come to their state and employed them in the field and other occupations. During their rule, a number of enterprising Marwari merchants had established themselves in the province.³ It is worth mentioning that these outsiders gradually merged with the Assamese nationality.

Different phases of Immigration

With the coming of the British into Assam, the demographic scenario had taken a new turn. After the treaty of Yandaboo between Burma and British on 24th February 1826, Assam became a integral part of British India. They began to run the administration of the country in order to suit their colonial motives which had its impact on the demography of Assam. The population of Assam increased very fast during the years 1872-81 but its rate of growth slowed down over the next 20

years, During 1891-1901, the decadal rate of population growth was 5.7% in the Brahmaputra Valley a little more than 6% in the Surma Valley.⁴ The natural growth of population was decreased due to natural calamities and epidemic. The black fever epidemic originally in the Garo Hills entered Assam proper in 1888 and gradually spread throughout the province. During 1881-91, the population of Goalpara sub-division decreased by 18%, kamrup by 1.6%. During the next decade the population of kamrup decreased by 7.1% that of Mangadoi sub-division of Darrang by 9% and of Nowgong by 24.8%.⁵ As a result, a large number of land remained uncultivated and soon became covered with deep jungles. But the British Government did not want to be deprived of the land revenue from these land. So, they encouraged large scale immigration to Assam. Captain Bulter, the district administrator of Nowgong and Mofat Mills, the chief judge of Sadar Diwani Adalat Calcutta favoured the importation of labourers into Assam to cultivate in the extensive wastelands and jungles. Not only the British officials, but some Assamese elites like Anandaram Dhekial Phukan, was also zealous to welcome the people to the Brahmaputra Valley to fulfill the shortcomings of the labour. But in the 19th century, the outsiders were brought only to the industrial sector not to the cultivated land of Assam.⁶ Due to the industrial development in the districts of upper Assam, such as in Lakhimpur, the population increased by 46% between 1891 and 1901 an estimated 16% through natural growth and 30% through immigration. Most of the immigrants into the 19th century came from tribal tract and were absorbed as labour and sometimes also as tenants in the tea plantations.⁷

We can divide the immigration during the British period into two phases (a) 1826 to 1905 and (b) 1905 to 1947. During the first phase tea plantation labourers, bureaucrats from Dacca, Mymensingh, Rangpur and other districts of Bengal, merchants and traders from Rajasthan and Bengal. The protest against Bengalee dominance in government offices in colonial Assam was the earliest issue of generating sub-nationalism. During the 2nd phase, Muslim peasants from East Bengal and Bengali Hindu immigrants continued to enter into Assam.⁸ Besides the immigrants from East Bengal, Nepalis also entered into Assam either from Nepal or from Bhutan.⁹ The presence of a large number of Nepalis in the regiment and frontier police encouraged the immigrants from Siliguri to move to the district of Lakhimpur. Some of them were engaged on rubber-cutters, dealers in buffaloes, sugarcane cultivators and dairy farming. The districts which were more attractive to the Nepalis were Darrang, Lakhimpur and Kamrup.¹⁰

The phenomenal expansion of tea plantation in the 2nd half of the 19th century created a huge demand for labourers. It is important to note that the government report showed that the local people remained practically the sole source of labour

for the tea industry till 1859. After abolition of slavery system in 1843 a large section of people lost their means of livelihood. So, they engaged themselves as wage labourers in the tea plantations.¹¹ For example, in 1869 in kamrup district, in 2873 acres land of tea plantation, there were 1,274 indigenous labourers as against 547 immigrant labourers'. In Darrang, there were 2786 local labourers as against 1290 imported labourers in tea plantation industry.¹² From 1859, supply of local labourers gradually slowed down in the tea plantation industry. There were numerous factors behind it. Demanding higher wages and other facilities the local labourers organized protest actions in 1848 and 1859 against the Assam Company. Among these demands the British administrators found the spirit of rebellion among the indigenous workers.¹³ So, they started recruiting labourers from outside the province such as from Bihar, Orissa, Central Provinces United Provinces and Madras.¹⁴

They were recruited on a contract basis and were expected to return to their original homes once the contract was over but most of them found a safe place in the nearby areas around the tea gardens.¹⁵ The British government also helped them in many ways to settle here. According to a government circular related to importation informed that freeland revenue for three years will be given to all who will settle in the province when their terms of agreement are work out. Many of them were also settled as cultivators. In 1923, such persons held 2,63,000 areas of land direct from the government, in addition to large areas which they occupied as tenants of the private landholders.¹⁶ In the census report of 1921 estimated that the total number of immigrants of tea garden and their descendants numbered about a million and a third or one sixth of the total population of the province.¹⁷ Besides, the labourers were also imported to work in mines and railways and in the war time in construction of roads, bridges and air fields etc.

In the next phase it is observed that vast tract of uncultivable fertile land and jungles attracted many peasants particularly from the district of Mymensingh (Banladesh). In 1905, Lord curzon's plan of partition of Bengal inaugurated a new era of unabated influx of population specially the Muslim immigrants from East Bengal. Assam had lost its separate identity as a province during the partition of Bengal in 1905 and was administratively merged with Dacca division of Bengal with a view to forming the new province called East Bengal and Assam with its headquarters at Dacca. It reduced the communication gap between East Bengal and Assam. In 1902 Brahmaputra Valley was connected by railway with Western Bengal and in 1904 with Eastern Bengal through Surma Valley. The development of railways also helped the immigration of people from East Bengal to Assam.¹⁸ Moreover the colonial scheme of jute cultivation was another factor of the immigration of East

Bengal peasants into Assam. The acreage under the jute in the Brahmaputra Valley increased from 30 thousand acre in 1905-04 to 106 thousands acre in 1919-20. The British encouraged the land hungry peasants particularly who faced inhuman atrocities of East Bengal zamindars to flow to the char areas for more jute cultivation.¹⁹

In Assam except Goalpara, Ryotwari settlement was prevalent. On the other hand, in Bengal under the Zamindari system, the peasants were subjected to inhuman atrocities. At first the peasants settled in char areas but gradually grabbed the grazing field and forest. This district became the first camp of the unsettled peasants in the last quarter of the 19th century. The ethnic factor was responsible for which they selected Goalpara. Because during that period Goalpara was the first district having Muslim majority population. Linguistically also the Bengali speaking immigrants could easily assimilate with the people of Goalpara because Bengali language was the mother tongue of 69% local inhabitants of Goalpara.²⁰ The official record showed that those who came in the decade of 1911 at first came as single adventures. But by the next decade, they began to settle with their family. During 1904-11, a total number of 54000 people of Mymensingh, Rangpur and Jalpaiguri districts entered into Assam. Out of these 51,000 settled in Goalpara and rest in other districts of Brahmaputra Valley. Their second choice was Nowgong. A large number of immigrants also settled in Barpeta sub-division of Kamrup district and Darrang. In Darrang out of total population 7,37,791 in 1941. There were 120,995 immigrants Muslims comprising more than 16% of total population.²¹

With the gradual influx of people from East Bengal, the number of Muslim population increased in Assam. It altered the socio-religious structure of Assam. Rajendra Prasad (later President of India) argued that it would create communal hatred in future and in order to maintain the balance between the Hindus and Muslims inspired the Bihari Hindus to settle here.²² According to him the influx of Mymensingh could be countered by allowing Bihari Hindus to settle down on land.

In 1937 under the leadership of Saadullah the United Party formed the government in Assam. The immigration policy of Saadullah was characterized as the policy of invitation of landless peasants from Bengal. The twin policy of Saadullah ministry 'Land Development' and 'Colonization Scheme' inspired large number of Muslim immigrants into Assam.²³ According to former scheme, a ban was imposed on settlement of immigrants in wastelands who entered Assam after 15th January, 1938. Wastelands were divided into blocks for indigenous Assamese and tribal people, scheduled Caste and immigrants after reserving 30% for existing population. Though its main purpose was to protect the interest of both indigenous

and immigrants but in practice the immigrants entered the intensive areas with the support of the Saadullah ministry.²⁴ Under the Colonization Scheme, the government took the responsibility to settle the immigrants in a planned way. During the period from 1939 to 41, one lakh bigha land had been given to the immigrants.²⁵ The census reports showed that between 1901 and 1931 the proportion of Muslim population in Goalpara rose from 28% to 44% in kamrup 9% to 24% in Nowgong 5% to 31% and in Darrang 5% to 11%. C.S. Mulan, the Census Commissioner stated that this change is likely to alter permanently the whole future of Assam and to destroy more surely than the Burmese invaders of 1820, the whole structure of Assamese culture and civilization. By 1947, there were approximately 3 million non indigenous people in a total population of about 7 milion.²⁶ During the 2nd world war, under the policy of 'Grow More Food' many Muslim immigrants were settled here. Grow More Food was described by Lord Wavel, Viceroy of British India as 'Grow More Muslim'.²⁷

Controversy on Line System

During the initial stage of influx of foreigners in 1920, a line system was introduced in Assam. The aim of this system was to isolate all immigrants from the local inhabitants. The outsiders were desired to line in particular segregated localities. The system was formally put into action in Nowgong and kamrup. Under the system land was classified into three categories (i) Those in which immigrants might settle freely (ii) those made available for local people (iii) those available for both. No immigrant would be allowed to hold more than 16 bighas of land and the local land holders also would be prohibited from subletting lands to immigrants and employing them as agricultural labour.²⁸

The line system inaugurated a new dimension in the politics of Assam because Muslim League stood in favour of the Muslim immigrants. Some Muslim leaders like Abdus Samad and Sirajuddin Master of Nowgong appealed to the government to abolish the line system. According to them it keeps alive feeling of separatism between the immigrants and the Assamese and on the whole among the subjects of same province. While controversy on the line system was going on government convened a meeting of the district officers at Shillong in 1928 to examine the issue that the line should be reduced and simplified with the object of allotting considerable blocks of land to each community. After that the scheme was introduced in Nowgong, Mangaldoi of Darrang District and Barpeta sub-division of Goalpara district. But it did not end the controversy on line system. In January, 1938, line system enquiry committee was formed with the members of F.W. Hochenbull, Chairman, Abdul Matin Choudhury, member Sayed Abdur Rouf, Sayidur Rahman,

Rabi Chandra Kachari, Mahendranath Saikia, Sarbeswar Baruah, Kameswar Das and A.G Patton. The committee submitted its report in 1938.²⁹ The Muslim members unitedly condemned the line system and advocated its abolition. But the non-Muslim members supported some restrictions in future.

After a gap of three years in 1942, again Saadullah ministry came to power for the fourth time. He convened an all party meeting in 1942 to find out a acceptable solution of the problem of line system. The meeting decided to keep the reserves 30% of available wastelands to the landless sons of the soil and immigrant people reached Assam for settlement before 1938. However, Saadullah government could not operate its resolution due to the opposition of the League and the leaders of the indigenous people.³⁰

The indigenous people of Assam tried all possible means to protect the land of Assam from the immigrants. Under the leadership of Ambikagiri Roychoudhuri, Asom Sangrakhini Sabha was formed for this purpose. All the nationalist association of Assam such as Jatiya Mahasabha, Kachari Association vehemently opposed the 'Land Development Scheme of Saadullah Ministry'.³¹ In 1946 Congress Party under Gopinath Bordoloi came to power. He tried to implement the government policy by evicting 54 families near Guwahati. Later he extended the policy to Darrang and Nowgaong. But he could not pursue the policy due to the strong opposition of the members of Muslim League.³²

The flow of immigration continued even after independence. Following the partition of the country, thousands of refugees from East Bengal (now Bangladesh) entered into Assam. Gopinath Bordoloi allowed to settle 2.35 lakhs Hindu refugees in Assam.³³ On 17th February 1950, the Central Government passed the immigration Act (Expulsion from Assam) to expel the non-bonafied refugees. According to the terms of Indo-Pak agreement of 8th May 1950, the rehabilitation of the refugees became a responsibility of the Government of India and Assam became a victim of it.³⁴

From the above discussion it is seen that the immigrants during the British rule may be broadly categorized into two groups. One those who came from the presidency of Bengal to take up wastelands for cultivation and another groups from distant areas for trade and meeting the growing demands of the tea gardens as well as general public and industrial undertakings. The another groups of people came from the neighbouring districts of Bengal, Dacca, Mymensingh, Rangpur were chiefly omlahs, traders, boatman, Khalosis and cargo steamers.³⁵ The economic changes in the middle of the 19th century had far reaching consequences in the social and cultural life of the people and to some extent, in their political outlook. Growth of tea plantation, discovery of coal, oil and construction of railway line facilitated immigration from across the border of Assam. Though Assam stood at

the age of material progress but in reality the indigenous people were not benefited. They exploited the resources of Assam only to fulfill their colonial interests. Besides vast tract of cultivable lands were also grabbed by the landless people of East Bengal. The immigration of outsiders during the British rule became a serious threat to the indigenous people both culturally and economically.

To sum up it can be said that the British rule inaugurated a new era *i.e.* the beginning of immigration issue which has a far reaching impact on the politics of Assam. At present Bangladeshi infiltrators became a great threat for the indigenous population of Assam. They use all the three available routes the surface routes riverine routes and railways to enter into Assam. It is observed that towards the end of seventies the issue of foreign immigration becomes a major concern in the socio-political aspects of the province. This issue was responsible for the occurrence of the Assam Movement which rocked the state for six years from 1979 to 1985.

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Review Article
Muslims of Bengal
An analysis of some Perspectives (1870s-1990s)

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Abstract

*Bengal Muslims have attracted the attention of British officials since the time of Permanent Settlement. The issues like peasant revolts, Faraizi movement and marginalization of Muslim elite during Inam Commission AD 1828-46 have enticed their interest. In the modern writings Bengal Muslim are treated as the 'zoology of the lower chordates' and have not come up to the grip of the problem in a manner which is required from the available data. In the 'bhadralok dominated' discourse, Muslim themselves are held responsible for their economic plight and educational backwardness. Such studies seldom take up the questions historically. Neither the files of Inam Commission could be accessed anywhere in India, nor the family papers of marginalized elite have survived. We only have colonial records providing a peep into the process/es of their marginalization. Any discussion on the plight of Bengal Muslim ought to begin with Permanent Settlement, the auction and monetization of zamindari rights. This review article seeks to analyse the data from much maligned and ignored work of W.W.Hunter, *Our Indian Musalmans-Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen*; Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*; Azizur Rahman Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757-1856*, and Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1900: A Quest for Identity*. These works specifically have taken up the Muslim questions therefore, it becomes important to understand the diversity in their approach. The paper will see how far these works have addressed the question seriously and how far their approach helps us to understand the marginalization of pre-colonial Muslim elite in the eastern region of the Empire. It will also be my endeavor to point out what has been missed in the above-mentioned studies. The data ignored by the above scholars contains much empirical data to pin point certain aspects which are missing in the above works.*

Historical Context

Muslim rule in Bengal began with the conquest of Muhammad Bakhtiyar in 1204 and lasted over five centuries. From 1204-1342, the region remained a province of Delhi Sultanate. The Sultans of Bengal, however, continued trying for their independence from Delhi. Thus, first-hand accounts provided by the scholars of Delhi Sultanate like Minhaj-al Siraj Juzjani, Amir Khusrau and Ibn-e Batutamentioned Bengal as a negative region and the Bengal rulers as rebels. Ibn-e Batuta, in fact, mentioned the region as *Dozakh-e pur Ni'mat i.e.*(the hell full of bounties). Amir Khusrau too condemned Bengal for being a land of 'seductive beauties'. For Khusrau it was this land of Bengal which kept Bughra Khan indulged into the beauties of Bengalso much so that he forgot all the advises of Balban and refused to come back to Delhi.

The desire for independence from Delhi's rule forced Bengal Sultans to situate themselves within the larger political cosmology of the Islamic east. The period of 14th-15th century therefore witnessed Bengal as highly influenced by the Indo-Islamic culture and as one which showed association with the larger 'Islamic world'. The establishment of Ilyas Shahi dynasty (1342-1487) as the first independent Turkic Muslim dynasty showed a number of huge religious buildings and the use of coins with Arabic verse, titles and legends. Mahur Ali in his work, *History of Muslims in Bengal*, showed that there was a tendency among the Bengali Sutlans to use Arabic titles for themselves like *Yemin-ud daulah* (strength of the domain), *Yemin-ul khilafa* (strenght of the Caliph), *Khalifat ul-llah bil-Hujjat wal-Burhan* (Caliph of God in possession and Proof), *Zi Allah fil-Alamin* (Shadow of God on the earth) etc. They used Arabic verses on their coins to invoke the authority of Caliphs of Baghdad. Mohur Ali records that out of the pre-Mughal inscriptions found in Bengal, 144 inscriptions are in Arabic, 21 in Arabic mixed with Persian, 1 in Sanskrit, 1 in Bengali and the rest in Persian.¹

The efforts of independent rule ended in failure with the coming of the colonial rule. The region was captured by the British East India Company after the defeat of Sirajuddaulah(the last independent Nawab of Murshidabad) in the battle of Plassey in 1757 and the complete hold came with the Battle of Buxar in 1764. By 1766, Bengal Presidency was established, eventually including all British territories north of Central Province. After assuming the *diwani* of Bengal, the EIC found itself short of trained administrators, especially those familiar with local customs and law. This resulted in the series of experiments of revenue extraction and maximization by the EIC.²

The next task for the EIC government was to deal with the pre-existing elites which, in this region, happened to be pre-dominantly Muslims and since the British were displacing Muslims, the Hindu majority was favourably inclined towards the British.³ Therefore, while in South and Western India, the Company had to deal with the actual tillers, 'in Bengal the old landed aristocracy was extinguished and the British had the convenience of dealing with a new Hindu social class which they themselves had created and which owed its wealth, social status and even its community leadership position to its association with the Europeans'.⁴

In 1772 under Warren Hastings, the EIC took over the revenue collection directly in its hand, establishing a Board of Revenue with offices in Calcutta and Patna, eventually moving the existing Mughal revenue records from Murshidabad to Calcutta. This shift of capital and switch over of the revenue administration had disastrous impacts on the earlier elite. Specially for Muslims, it was practically an end of their presence in almost every important sphere of public life- judiciary, police or army. Last but not the least, the *ma'afi* holders became a target of the new administration in their quest for maximizing the revenue on one hand and making redundant the intellectual elite on the other. The crackdown over Muslims increased tremendously and openly after the revolt of 1857, where many of the *ma'afi* holders had participated and issued various proclamations in support of the rebel leaders. Thus, a number of policies were introduced to stop the grants and incomes of this class. They were reduced to the position of 'poor cousins of the landed elite who were now supporting the policies of the British Raj'.⁵ Their situation further declined in 1843 when *Faraizis* were found actively participating against the British rule.⁶

In the light of these events, the present paper questions the dominant idea that the Muslim nobility chose to perish rather than support the new rulers and tries to argue, specifically in the context of Bengal, that 'choosing' something was actually not left as an option to Muslims. Rather, Muslim nobility was systematically uprooted from the ground much before and more so after the Revolt of 1857 as a punishment and/or as a threat of wahabi/faraizi movement.

The present essay attempts to analyse and uncover some of those writings which deals with the issue of condition of Muslims in Bengal under the British rule. This includes *Our Indian Musalmans-Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen* by W. W. Hunter, *The Muslims of British India* by Peter Hardy, Azizur Rahman Mallick's *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal 1757-1856*, and Rafiuddin Ahmed's *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1900: A Quest for Identity*. All these works deal specifically with the Muslim questions, for a continuing period starting from 1757 to 1900 mainly in relation to the British policies in India. The paper attempts to understand the changes and continuity in society, polity and culture over the period of time. There will also be an attempt to seek the silences of the

writers over certain policies of the British, especially regarding the change in the position of citizenry and the system of education.

Muslims in Bengal: Post Census Era

The wrong impression that Muslims formed only a small section of the population was prominent during the colonial period. Even by 1871-72, Grant Duff referred to people of Bengal as the 'Hindoo population'.⁷ Perhaps, culturally as well as linguistically, the Muslims of Bengal were not much different from the Hindus of Bengal and this fusion must have led people to make wrong assumptions about the number of the Muslim population in Bengal. However, the 1872 Census by H. Beverley had revealed that Muslim population of Bengal was much larger than had been supposed. The Census mentioned 77.6% Muslims out of a total population of 1,310,729. Quoting Adam's survey of 1827, Beverley recorded the number of Muslims being 'seven to three, in the proportion of 1,000 Musalmans to 450 Hindus'.⁸ The Census of 1881 showed that under the Lieutenant-Governor nearly 30% of a total population of 69,536,861 were Muslims and the great majority i.e. 25.6% were within Bengal proper.⁹ In the three divisions of Rajshahi, Dacca and Chittagong, Muslims formed nearly two-thirds of the population. As per 1941 Census of India, the province of Bengal had 33 million Muslims, constituting 55% of the population: it was the largest concentration of Muslims in the entire subcontinent.¹⁰ Thus, Muslims had been a significant group in Bengal and the erasure or degradation of this group during colonial rule is an important area to study.

Providing an argument for the presence of this large population of Muslims Beverley wrote that it was not the introduction of foreigners but the real reason was the conversion to Islam of the numerous low castes. This can be further substantiated by the close resemblance between Muslims of Bengal and their fellow-countrymen who were still from the low castes of Hindus. Both were 'originally of the same race seems sufficiently clear, not merely from their possessing identically the same physique, but from the similarity of the manners and customs which characterize them.'¹¹ This conversion, in turn, was not due to coercion and conflicts but voluntary.¹² In its struggle with Hinduism, Buddhists collaborated Arabs much earlier and more completely than Hindus.¹³ However, scholars have rejected this idea of conversion. Thus, KhondkarFazli Rabi wrote *The Origins of the Musalmans of Bengal* (1895) and asserted that 'the ancestors of the present Musalmans of this country were certainly those Musalmans who came here from foreign parts during the rule of the former sovereigns, and that the present generation of Musalmans are the offspring of that dominant race who remained masters of the land for 562 years'.¹⁴

The later scholars continued to link Bengali Muslims to the Muslims of foreign races like Turks, Afghans, and Persian etc.

Understanding and simplifying this problem of origin, many of the scholars have referred to the distinction between *ashraf* and *ajlaf*.¹⁵ The Bengal Census of 1901 recorded two major social divisions among the Bengal Muslims: i) *Ashraf* or *sharif* or upper class Muslims, who were undoubtedly the descendants of foreigners and upper caste Hindu converts; ii) *Ajlaf* or *atrap* or *atraf*, which meant the low born and included all other Muslims. Besides, a third group also existed *i.e.* *arzal* and this included people of degraded class.¹⁶

The process of marginalization of Muslims is reflected in the contemporary English public records and a passing mention is made here and there in the official publications too. W. W. Hunter's work *Our Indian Musalman-Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queens* (London, 1872; Karachi Reprint, 1964) for example, is the earliest work to describe the pathetic conditions to which Muslim elite as the middle class has been reduced to. He is the only one to have referred to the infamous Inam Commission, 1828-1846¹⁷ and the disastrous impacts on the *ma'afi* holders and the institutions and education system of Muslims.

The Systematic Purge: Introduction of Resumption Proceedings

In order to consolidate its position in Bengal, East India Company sought a support base in indigenous population which was made possible by establishing financial and administrative control over the colony. Such control was affected through a number of measures such as the appropriation of all sources of revenue including large revenue-free land grants and rent-free endowments.¹⁸ The process of this appropriation was started with the policy of resumption proceedings from the time of Lord Cornwallis in AD 1793 onwards which greatly affected the old religious, intellectual and other kinds of revenue free grant holders.

In the pre-colonial India, many of the revenue-free land grants (variously known as *ai'mma*, *suyurghal*, *madad-e ma'ash*, and *ma'afi*) were given to individuals and often to institutions by the rulers and in return the grantees were supposed to maintain and promote learning & education, health services and other charity works by using surplus from it.¹⁹ Generally, these grants were made for life time of the grantee but in 1690s Aurangzeb made these grants perpetual.²⁰ Thus, any change in the subsequent State policy vis-à-vis revenue grantees adversely affected not only the fortunes of the individual grantees but also the fate of the institutions they were managing.²¹

The Bengal Presidency had huge *ma'afi* grants and holders during the time of colonial takeover. But the system came to a halt from 1793 onwards, when there began investigations and resumption of those holdings which did not possess correct

title deeds properly registered with the collector. These resumption proceedings were supposedly 'financially oriented' and were said to have been 'meant to compensate for the loss sustained' on account of Permanent settlement of the land revenue in 1793. The government was not interested in examining whether the land was misused or if the original purpose was fulfilled. Rather, it was to augment the income of the government as reflected in Sir John Shore's minute of 18th June 1789 saying that even 'at the rate of half a rupee per bigha, the assessment of rent-free lands in Bengal would fetch an annual revenue of some 35 lakhs of rupees'.²² Thus, the resumption proceedings were increased whenever the government felt the need of increased finances such as after the Mysore wars or after Marath wars or after the Afghan wars.

Finally, a number of regulations were passed in 1811, 1817, 1819, 1828 and 1833 in order to find the faults in titles of the holders. Accordingly, the holders had to prove that the land holdings were in possession for at least 12 years before the British rule. It was difficult to procure the copy of these rules for all the people, mainly for those living in rural areas. The registration of the titles was also a severe task. Further, the climate and the state of the country did not allow the old document to survive long; 'ravages of climate and pests, of Marathas and dacoits, of family disputes over succession or the indolence of a self-assured aristocracy'.²³ Many of the genuine holders were based on popular respected tradition rather than on written documents.²⁴ The problem increased due to the fact that a number of fraudulent *la-kharaj* (revenue free land) tenures were created by the zamindars during 1765-1790, which emerged as a disadvantage to the genuine *la-kharaj* holders. This came as a big blow to the grantees and most of them lost their landholdings and were forced to live a miserable life. This also led to a virtual collapse of the traditional education system in the province, which once possessed of several thousand *madarsas*, many of which provided free education to the poor. The Buchanan Hamilton Report (1807-14) and Adam's Report (1835-38) informed that huge *ma'afi* grants were attached with the task of education in the Rajshahi district of Bengal, providing education to both Hindus and Muslims. Adam's Report mentioned the presence of 14 Hindu teachers as against 215 Muslim teachers and 2096 Hindu students as against 1558 Muslim students in five districts of Bengal Presidency.²⁵

W.W. Hunter's *Our Indian Musalmans* is the only source giving a detailed account of resumption proceedings and its effects over the landholders. He asserted that these laws 'put a finishing stroke to their (Musalman) fortunes.....During the last 75 years the Musalman houses of Bengal have either disappeared from the earth, or are at this moment being submerged beneath the new strata of society

which our Rule has developed....’²⁶ Giving examples of destruction of Muslim families and institutions, he wrote that:

‘In the district of Hughli way back in 1806 a wealthy Shia gentleman left a huge estate for the pious uses. These uses were specified in the will he left which were maintenance of certain religious rites and ceremonies, repair and maintenance of the *imambara*, the burial ground pensions for the beneficiaries and some religious establishments. As a result of the litigation between the two branches of the family the government assumed the management of the estate appointing itself as a trust. Huge amount of money was wasted in the process and adding insult to injury, was the attempt by the government to divert these funds for the establishment of an English college (while the will was quite specific for the college for the poor Muslims)’.²⁷

Not only resumption, there was also misappropriation of the remaining rent-free grants and endowments. The funds of Haji Mohsin Trust, for example, were used for purposes other than they meant for.²⁸ The Trust was meant for the maintenance of an *Imambara* at Hugli but after the death of Haji Mohsin in 1813, the government intervened in the affairs of the Trust. In 1817 the managers were dismissed and an officer under the Board of Revenue was appointed to look after the affairs and a *madarsa* was founded at Hugli out of the trust funds. On 1st August 1836, a college for higher education was opened at Hugli and the existing *madarsa* was attached with the college under the name of ‘oriental department’. The problem here was that the college was established not in the capital city of Calcutta where an English college was much needed, nor even in an area like Jessor where the trust estates were situated and where the proportion of Muslim and Hindu populations was fairly balanced. But it was opened at Hugli which was predominantly a Hindu area with Muslims numbering not more than 2-3 percent of the total population. It was extremely difficult for the (economically ruined) Muslims of the other districts to send their children to Hugli or to provide for their maintenance at the college’.²⁹ This way, the funds were used for the promotion of English language, European literature & sciences and Christian rather than Muslim education. Though not all colleges of Oriental learning were abolished but their funds were altered with and often appropriated.

Hunter accused the colonial administration for the misappropriation of these scholastic funds. The huge *waqf* estates which the Muslims had created for the advancement of education of the Muslims were treated by the British officials in the most dishonest manner.³⁰ Hunter cited the examples from various districts of Bengal showing the casual manner in which the English colonial officers treated such noble acts of the Bengal Muhammadans.

‘At the moment (*i.e.* 1871) the head of the college is an English gentleman ignorant of a single word of Persian and Arabic who draws £1500 a year from Muhammadan religious endowment for teaching things hateful to every Musalman. It is not, of course, his fault, but the fault of government which placed him there, and which for thirty-five years has been deliberately misappropriating this great educational fund. In vain it attempted to cloak so gross a breach of trust by attaching a small Muhammadan school to the English college. Besides the misappropriation of the accumulated fund in building the College, it annually diverted £5000 to its maintenance. That is to say, out of an income of £5260, it devoted only £350 to the little Muhammadan school which alone remained to bear witness to the original character of the Trust . . .’³¹ This acted as an add-on to the decreasing status of Muslim education and left Muslims with almost nothing to run these religious institutions.

The responsibility of this destruction has been shifted from British policies to the attitude of the elite class itself by some scholars. Peter Hardy in his work *The Muslims of British India* tried to purge the image of British authorities in relation to Muslims of Bengal. He managed to show that it was the failure of Muslims *themselves* to avail the benefits provided by the English authorities that resulted in their destruction in Bengal.³² Rejecting Hunter’s view, he wrote that actually there is no record of ‘number and income of grantees, Hindu or Muslim, in Bengal during the period of resumption’, neither we have any account of value of resumption.³³ He ignored Hunter’s remark that ‘from the highest official to the lowest, there is now a firm conviction that we have failed in our duty to the Muhammadan subjects of the Queen. A great section of the Indian population, some thirty million in number, finds itself decaying under British Rule. They complain that they, who but yesterday were the conquerors and governors of the land, can find no subsistence in it today’.³⁴

Quoting the Education Commission Report of 1882 Hardy suggested that ‘the result of even the harshest resumption case, was, not the dispossession of the holder but the assessment of revenue on his holding, and even that in no case at more than half the prevailing rate’.³⁵ It is important to understand here that though the harshest measure of resumption was not dispossession, but the day by day increasing amount of revenues were forcing people to sell their land which ultimately meant dispossession. P. Hardy ignored the detailed statistics provided by Hunter where he captured all the details of confiscation of the three great sources-Military command, the collection of Revenue and judicial or political employment- of Muslim dominance.³⁶ According to Hardy, the impacts of colonial rule varied from region

to region. It certainly ruined the office-holding Muslim aristocrat of lower Bengal and Muslim weaver of Dacca, but not all at once. For Muslims in Punjab, he argued, it brought security; for Bombay it brought wealth to those engaged in shipping; and for some in the North-Western Provinces it brought more land.³⁷ Giving these comparative statistics, Hardy subdues the fact that the destruction of intellectual elite and the institutions of (free) education in Bengal cannot be compensated with providing security to Punjab or support to shipping. The desolation of a whole system of indigenous education cannot be justified.

Rafiuddin Ahmed too shifted the responsibility of the marginalization of Muslims over the Muslim *ashraf*. He acknowledged the fact that 'many of them (*ashraf*) were seriously impoverished by such measures as the Permanent Settlement of land revenue (1793), the resumptions (after 1828) and replacement of Persian by English as the language of Court (1837)'.³⁸ But since the Muslims were divided into *ashraf* and *atrap*, the former became very conscious of their social superiority and did not allow *atrap* to move upward in the social ladder and no significant change was noted in their social basic attitudes.

The classification within a community in India was nothing unique to Muslims, it was there in Hindu community as well and so were the attempts by lower class for upward mobility and efforts by the upper class to hinder their efforts. The distinction of *ashraf* and *ajlaf* was there in Indian society since the time of Iltutmish. Imtiaz Ahmad mentioned in his work that the *ashraf* class was given prominence in the administration not only during Iltutmish but also under the later rulers like Balban and Mohammad Tughlaq.³⁹ However, during this period we did not see any conflict between the two groups, where *ashraf* was trying to oppress *ajlaf*. Rafiuddin also discussed about a society of 1870s-80s, where the division between *ashraf* and *ajlaf* was constructed not only as two different categories but also as the two having hatred for each other, more specifically after the revolt of 1857. The division came with the coming of British rule and with the rapid increase in the population during 1871-91. The two factors not only changed the demographic character of Bengal but also left a lasting impression on the psychological makeup of the Bengali Muslims by making them more self-conscious and assertive about their rights and privileges.⁴⁰ Thus, intra-community differences, which emerged from second half of the nineteenth century could not be used as a reason for the decline of Muslims which has started from late eighteenth century itself.

The theory of class distinction was used by scholars primarily to cover up the extreme backwardness to which the Muslim class was reduced due to the

colonial policies. Thus, we see the whole responsibility of the revolt of 1857 was transferred to the *ajlaf* class by Syed Ahmad Khan, saying that *ashrafia* had nothing to do with the revolt. For him *bâghis* were the disgruntled elements of the society and used very derogatory words for them, calling them ‘vagabond and ill-conditioned men’, ‘wine drinkers and men who spent their time in debauchery and dissipation’, ‘men floating without profession or occupation on the surface of the society’, with the sole aim ‘to plunder government treasury and to steal government property’.⁴¹ This goes in direct contradiction to the fact the educated class were very much at the forefront of the revolt. Many of the leaders of the revolt like Fazl-e Haq Khairbadi, Dr. Wazir Khan, numerous pirzadas and Ulema were erstwhile elite of the society. We have also seen the engagements and involvement of the people associated with *tariqa e Mohammadia*, who were undoubtedly the most educated class of the people.

Diminishing share in Bureaucracy

Azizur Rahman Mallick has shown that not only the Muslim *zamindars* in particular, but the Muslims in general were destroyed at all the levels in Bengal. The three major classes of Muslims i.e the royal household, the nobility and peasants/weavers were greatly hit by the British policies even before the Revolt. The battle of Buxer, Plassey and the diarchy ended the fate of the Nawab who now ‘was allowed to govern, never to rule.’⁴² His income like his powers was greatly reduced and he was left in a position unable to provide employment or issue jagirs to his nobles. Similarly, the upper class, which had a firm hold over military services, revenue collection and Judicial and political employment, was reduced to a level of unemployment and poverty. The end of the powers of Nawab forced all the Muslims to rely mainly on the land. Here too, the permanent settlement ruined them effecting the position of Zamindars. The same was the fate of lower Muslim class i.e peasantry and weavers. They were suffered with the increased power of zamindar due to Permanent settlement and the forceful indigo plantation; while Muslim weavers were greatly hit by the introduction of cheap machine made goods from Britain. Thus, it is significant to note here that no Muslim name other than that of the King of Delhi was mentioned in the list of prominent natives of respectability created by a native newspaper.⁴³

Peter Hardy argued that Muslims and Hindus equally suffered the impacts of colonial rule; Muslims could have prospered just as non-Muslims did. For him,

there was no disproportionate decline in Bengal. 'Muslims did suffer, but whether they suffered disproportionately to Hindus remain a matter of opinion, not knowledge' and for the period of Revolt, 'Hindus and Muslims shared the common fate under British revenue and agrarian policies'.⁴⁴ Quoting from Agra 1880 Report, he wrote that 'Muslims had lost 7,904 acres from all causes since the previous settlement in 1841. In the same period, excluding confiscation from Rebellion, thakurs (Hindu landholders) had lost 45,000 acres'.⁴⁵ Further, quoting from the *Education Commission Report of 1882* Hardy said that 'even the harshest resumption case was not the dispossession of the holder but the assessment of revenue on his holding, and even that in no case at more than half the prevailing rate.' Many others have also argued that the loss of landholdings was faced by both Hindu and Muslim zamindars and what kept the Hindus alive was that they 'showed greater resilience and power of self-preservation than the Muslims through *benami* purchases of holdings. The Muslim landed nobility in contrast was least able to protect itself from 'Sunset Law' imposed to secure timely collection of revenue.⁴⁶

Peter Hardy, however, did not record the deliberate rules and policies of government which the Muslims were not suitable to fit in.⁴⁷ They were attacked systematically by abolishing the language Muslims were familiar with or by providing favours to their counterparts. They had no share in the cash accumulation which led to the rise of commercial elite among the Hindus in Bengal in 18th and 19th centuries. Binoy Ghosh writes that there were practically no *diwans*, *Banians* or *mutasaddis* among Muslim at this time.⁴⁸ Therefore, when trade policies under the Company's rule favoured Indian agents, only Hindus went forward often acting as broker, interpreter, cashier, middlemen and *paikers* (suppliers of finished goods) in the transaction of the Company as well as its European servants. The Census of 1901 also showed that Muslims formed a large part of the agricultural population of Bengal. Here also, most of them were tenants rather than landlords. In every 10,000 Muslims no less than 7,316 were cultivators, but only 5,555 amongst the same number of Hindus. The proportion of landowners was only 170 in 10,000 in the case of Muslims as against 217 in the same number of Hindus.⁴⁹

The bias towards Muslim was very much bold and clear in terms of government jobs. Hunter presented a table of appointments of Englishmen, Muslims and Hindus in the government jobs which showed the irregular distribution or a complete absence of the Muslim candidates. Hunter mentioned a complete statistics of the major departments of the government in Bengal for 1871 showing the meagre number of Muslim employees as against the European and Hindu employees.⁵⁰

Distribution of State Patronage in Bengal, April 1871⁵¹

Serial No.	Area of appointments	Europeans	Hindus	Musalmans	Total
1	Covenanted Civil Services (appointed in England by the Crown)	260	0	0	260
2	Judicial officers in the Non Regulation District	47	0	0	47
3	Extra Assistant Commissioners	26	7	0	33
4	Deputy Magistrates and Deputy Collectors	53	113	30	196
5	Income tax Assessors	11	43	6	60
6	Registration Department	33	25	2	60
7	Judges of Small Cause Court and Subordinate Judges	14	25	8	47
8	Munsif	1	178	37	216
9	Police Department, Gazetted Officers of all grades	106	3	0	109
10	Public Works Department, Engineer Establishment	154	19	0	173
11	Public Works Department, Subordinate Establishment	72	125	4	201
12	Public Works Department, Account Establishment	22	54	0	76
13	Medical Department	89	65	4	158
14	Department of Public Instruction	38	14	1	53
15	Other Departments like Custom, Marine, Survey, Opium etc.	412	10	0	422
16	Total	1338	681	92	2111

Class one professions	Hindus	Muslims
Officers of National government	675	4
Officers of Municipal, local and village government	7,860	296
Independent govt. and native states	00	00
Persons engaged in the defense of the country	35	03
Lawyers and law departments	251	09
All types of physicians	123	41
Artists	2,221	66
Musicians	44	52
Actors	10	02
Teachers	1,044	83
Scientific persons	65	01

Similar was the situation in other secular professions such as law where the number of pleaders of the High Court and attorneys declined over a period of time; medicine which was never considered a profession worthy of consideration by a high-born Muslim but even in that profession Muslims were to be found very rarely.⁵² Thus, there was 'scarcely a government office in Calcutta in which a Muhammadan can hope for any post above the rank of porter, messenger, filler of the inkpots and mender of pens ...'⁵³ He said it very clearly that, 'a hundred and seventy years ago it was almost impossible for a well-born Musalman in Bengal to become poor; at present it [is] almost impossible for him to continue [to be] rich ... [for the] army is now completely closed. No Muhammadan gentleman of birth can enter our regiments ... our action has brought ruin upon Muhammadan houses of Bengal. We shut the Musalman aristocracy out of the army because we believe that their exclusion was necessary to our safety ...'.⁵⁴

To justify their softness towards Hindus, the English began to develop solid arguments. For example the commonality of Indo-European linguistic was interpreted in purely racial terms. In 1786, Sir William Jones (1746-1794), the founder of Asiatic Society, declared that Sanskrit, Greek and Latin 'sprung from some common source, which, perhaps, no longer exists'.⁵⁵ The idea was that Europeans and the upper-caste Hindus belonged to the same 'Aryan race, while the Muslims were the other. The British rule set up by defeating the Muslims was therefore a restoration. The Hindus had had their period of glory in the ancient past when the Europeans were still barbarians; now it was the turn of their European brethren to rule'.⁵⁶ Thus, the British worked to appease Hindus to create a support base for themselves and also to eliminate Muslims.

The Government policies were designed in such a way that Hindus and others were preferred more. Hunter acknowledged that exclusion of Muslims partially resulted due to the policy of discrimination practiced by the government against the Muslims and he quoted from the Government Gazette from the office of the Sunderbans Commissioner which clearly stated that: '*the appointment would be given to none but the Hindus...*'⁵⁷

The re-organization of British government in Bengal displaced the norms of the previous rule. This initiative produced far-reaching and long-lasting consequences. The Muslim predominance in the judicial service in Bengal was challenged. It was decided that in civil cases -regarding inheritance, marriage, caste and other religious usages or institutions, 'the laws of the Koran' will be followed for Muslims and 'those of the Shaster' for Hindus. The fact that 'the Hindus were no longer subject to the Muslim law and that the Hindu and Muslim laws were now declared to be 'co-existing and co-equal' was a significant concession to the Hindus because legally the Company was acting on behalf of

the theocratic Mughal Empire'.⁵⁸ Following this, all the public and private areas of dominance were re-drafted in order to balance the socio-political scene. The imperial taxes, the police and the Court of laws and the army were major sources of income and power of Muslims in Bengal. All these areas were now completely taken over from the Muhammadans. The proportion of Muhammadans to Hindus was now less than one-seventh and of Musalmans to Europeans was less than one-fourteenth.⁵⁹

Hardy recorded that the Muslim grantees were certainly not destroyed as a class before 1857 in the upper provinces. Understanding the complex structure of agriculture and thinking of Muslims as the prime convenors of revolt of 1857, the resumption proceedings were targeted towards them. While some of Hindus too were punished and their holdings were also extracted but the proportion was far less.

The aftermath of the revolt witnessed a series of punishments in the forms of massacre, killings, confiscation and so on. The theory of 'Muslim conspiracy' gained much weight amongst the EIC official circle and thus, the British were extremely unhappy with the role of Muslim aristocracy in 1857 and therefore, the brunt of the British wrath was faced by the Muslims and not so much by the Hindus. According to Peter Hardy, in Delhi, Awadh and other surrounding areas, the whole character of the Mutiny *i.e.* organisation, members, rebel leaders, constitutions, vocabulary, everything was Muslim. However, Muslims were treated badly only in the Bengal region.⁶⁰ In Delhi alone some 200,000 Muslims were killed by the British troops while many were sent to Andaman Island for life imprisonments.⁶¹ The economic, social and cultural symbols of their prestige or of the previous regime were sought to be ended and thus, 'the Prime Minister, Palmerston, wrote to Canning, the Viceroy in India, 'that every civil building connected with Mahomedan tradition' (indirectly referring to the Jama Masjid) should be levelled to the ground 'without regard to antiquarian veneration or artistic predilection'.⁶² However, the Prime Minister's suggestion was not followed but many other markers of Muslim civilization were ruined. The activities of Saiyid Ahmad Bareilly and Dudu Miyan's followers had a profound long-term effect on British political strategy in India. It reinforced the British belief that Muslims were 'fanatical and irreconcilable and could only be kept quiet by a judicious mixture of buffets and boons'.⁶³

There are large number of pre-revolt indigenous sources like local newspapers which reflects the British atrocities on Muslims even before the occurrence of 1857 revolt. The infamous *Inam* Commission, for example, which has come in 1828 *i.e.* much before the Revolt of 1857, is an important speaking source for the Muslim ruin. The policy had also caused a decline of the 'professional bureaucrats (mainly *kayasths*), who had developed their expertise in Persian, especially in the work of accountancy, letter writing (*insha*) and maintaining of the

official records.’ What remained was the ‘legacy of this class’ ‘in the family surnames like Majumdar, Qanungo and Chaudhary etc., which points out to their being the holders of the bureaucratic positions in the pre-colonial regimes’.⁶⁴

Therefore, Hunter was right in saying that ‘the Muhammadans have suffered most severely under British Rule’.⁶⁵ He mentioned that from the time of Warren Hastings in 1772 till 1828, ‘it was deliberated in the official circles to start the resumption proceedings and finally in 1828.....special courts were created, and during the next 18 years the whole province was overrun with informers, false witnesses, and stern pale faced Resumption Officials’ As a result of this gigantic exercise ‘an outlay of £ 800,000 upon resumption proceedings, an additional revenue of £ 300,000 a year was permanently gained by the State, representing a capital at five percent of six million sterling. A large part of this sum was derived from lands held free by Musalmans or by Muhammadan foundations...The educational system of Musalmans, which was almost entirely maintained by rent-free grants, received its death-blow. The scholastic classes of the Muhammadans emerged from the eighteen years of harrying absolutely ruined’.⁶⁶

This systematic and deliberate effort to eliminate Muslim class was given a justification after the revolt of 1857. Thus, we see that the question of the Muslims of Bengal in the contemporary scholarly writings has been treated in a highly tenacious manner. The real issues have been seldom taken up. This is partially due to the ‘colonial mindset’ and imperialist arrogance trying to justify all the acts of the colonial officials however irresponsible it might have been. The modern writings, barring of course Azizur Rahman Mallick, have closely followed the colonial discourse. It needs to point out that the records of the Inam commission between 1828-46 are not simply available in any Indian archive, museum or repository. Similarly, the family papers of the affected families seems to have vanished along with those families, leaving a huge desideratum for the scholars to work out the contours of development and important chapter of the social history of Bengal prior to 1857. A careful de-construction of the colonial records and perhaps the indigenous discourse will help us to reconstruct the process/es of marginalization of the Bengali Muslims under the colonial regime.

Notes & References

¹Mohur Ali, *History of Muslims in Bengal*, vol.1A, Riyadh, 1985, p.13; People gradually turned intolerant to the use of Arabic for writing Bengali. The narrowness was such that in 1951 in the Convocation address at Dhaka University, Syed Suleman Nadvi (the best contemporary Islamic scholar in India and Pakistan and the author of Prophet’s most authentic Urdu biography) was attacked on his idea of going back to Arabic script for Bengali. His idea of using Arabic to save a large number of heritage in the form of Arabic

manuscript was not accepted by the Bengali public mainly because they considered Arabic script as the domination of Urdu speaking elite; I am thankful to Professor S.Z.H. Jafri for providing me this information; The Bengali Muslims were already facing the 'Bengali or Urdu' controversy which remained unsolved for a long time. The prominent leaders of the time like Abdul Latif and Ameer Ali demned before the Education Commission that, 'Urdu should be to the Mahomedans what Bengali is to the Hindus of Bengal'. The educated class rejected Bengali as they saw it as an imprint of Hindu religion. Thus they began to speak colloquial Bengali called Patois. This was a 'mixture of Arabic and Persian words which the common people pronounced in a corrupted form.', Mohammad Abdur Rahim, *Muslim Society and Politics in Bengal 1557-1947*, Dacca University, 1978, p.143, cf. Asim Pada Chakrabarti, *Muslim Identity and Community Consciousness: Bengal Legislative Politics 1912-36*, Calcutta, 1993, p.9.

²See, Baden Powell, *Land System in British India*, Calcutta, 1882.

³Rajesh Kochhar, 'Seductive orientalism: English education and modern science in colonial India', *Social Scientist*, 26, pp. 45-63, 2008.

⁴*ibid.*

⁵Saiyid Zaheer Husain Jafri, 'Indo-Islamic Learning and the Colonial State' in D.N. Jha (ed.), *The Evolution of a Nation: Pre-Colonial to Post Colonial* (Essays in Memory of R.S. Sharma), Manohar, 2014, pp.429-450.

⁶Taufiq Ahmad Nizami, *Muslim Political Thought and Activity in India during the First Half of the 19th Century*, Aligarh, 1969, p.86.

⁷Azizur Rahman Mallick, *British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal, 1757-1856 (A Study of Development of the Muslims in Bengal with special reference to their Education)*, Asiatic Society of Pakistan, 1961, p.198; Dr. James Wise also mentioned that "when the English magistrates first came in contact with the people of Bengal, they arrived at the conclusion that the Muhammadans only comprised one percent of the population.", Wise, 'The Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1894Part III, No.1, p.31, cf. Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912*, OUP, Bangladesh, 1974, p.3.

⁸H. Beverley, *Report of the Census of Bengal, 1872*, Calcutta, 1872, p.131.

⁹Sufia Ahmed, *Muslim Community in Bengal 1884-1912*, OUP, Bangladesh, 1974, p.2.

¹⁰Census of India, 1941, *Command Paper* No 6479, Table VI, II, cf. Ayesha Jalal, *The Sole Spokesman Jinnah, The Muslim League and the Demand for Pakistan*, Cambridge University Press, London, 1985, p.2.

¹¹H. Beverley, *op.cit.*, pp.132-33.

¹²I H. Qureshi, pp.39-42. Qureshi argued that at this time Mahayanist Buddhism was prevalent in Sind and resembled Hinduism in its essential tenets. It had become "corroded from within(by the infiltration of Hindu beliefs and practices; cf. Derryl, *Religion and Society in Arab Sind*, Ph.D. thesis, McGill University, 1984, pp.93-4.

¹³*ibid.*, pp.122-24.

¹⁴KhondkarFazli Rabi, *The Origins of the Musalmans of Bengal* (1895; Dacca: Soc. for Pakistan Studies, 1970) p. 43.

¹⁵*Atrap* is a Bengali equivalent and corrupted form of *atraf* or *aljaḥ*.

¹⁶E.A. Gait, *Census of India 1901*, Vo.VI, Part 1, pp. 439-451, cf. AsimPadaChakrabarti, *op cit*, p.5; H.H. Risley, *The People of India*, Calcutta, 1915, pp. 122-23; It is noteworthy that the elite household used to have *maktabs* or institutions where along with their own children, their servants, their poor staff and the neighbors were also provided free education. Thus, we see that the conflict between *ashraf* and *ajlaf* was not there and the division itself was only recently constructed in the colonial era. Further, this social divide among Muslims was there everywhere in India including UP, Punjab, Bihar and other regions. But for strange reasons this question is highlighted only in the context of Bengal. Nowhere else this debate has survived.

¹⁷According to Hunter, Inam Commission was set up in 1828 for the resumption of land grants that were earlier given to the scholastic classes to maintain and nurture their educational institutions; see, W.W. Hunter, *Our Indian Musalman-Are they Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen*, reprint Calcutta, 1945.

¹⁸The original term for the revenue free land was *la-kharaj*, which means 'tax-free' land. According to Mohur Ali, land-tax (*kharaj*) came to be termed as 'rent' after the Permanent settlement. Thus, 'rent-free' came to be used for and as equal to 'tax-free', see, Mohur Ali, *History of Muslims in Bengal*, vol. II, p. 135.

¹⁹Analyzing the records of a *Sufi* hospice, *Khanqah-e Karimia* at Salon, Rai Bareilly, Prof. Jafri argues that the *Sufi Khanqah* had become a center for dissemination of knowledge in pre-colonial times and the same has been destroyed by the colonial policies in the aftermath of the revolt; see Jafri, 'Indo-Islamic Learning and the Colonial State', *op.cit.*, pp.429-450.

²⁰B.H.Baden Powell however, does not accept the idea of land grants as perpetual. In the context of Northwest province, he says that the old meaning of *jagiror* revenue free land changed over time. He says that the Mughal idea 'that *jagir* only granted the revenue, not the land and that it was only for the life of grantee' evaporated and all *jagirs* became hereditary; see Baden Powell, p.154-55.

²¹Jafri, 'Indo-Islamic Learning and the Colonial State', *op. cit.*, pp.429-450.

²²*Fifth Report*, Appendix I, 181, cf., Mohur Ali, vol II, p.137.

²³Azizur R Mallick, *op.cit.*, p. 45.

²⁴Mohur Ali, vol II, pp.138-9.

²⁵cf. Jafri, *op.cit.*, pp.429-450.

²⁶Hunter, *op.cit.*, p.122.

²⁷Hunter, *op.cit.*, P.140.

²⁸Haji Mohammad Mohsin was a Shia of Persian origin who had settled at Hugli. He had huge wealth from trade and from his sister but had no heir to use this wealth. Thus, he created a trust on his property in 1806, for the support and maintenance of Imambara at Hugli, appointing two managers instructing them to divide the income of property into nine equal shares- two for their own use, two for the expenses of Imambara, four for the payment of salaries and pensions of the officers and workers of Imambara; see Mohur Ali, vol II, pp.168-9.

- ²⁹Mohur Ali, vol II, *op.cit.*, p.171.
- ³⁰Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 141.
- ³¹*ibid.*, p.141.
- ³²Peter Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*, Cambridge, 1972, p.47.
- ³³*ibid.*
- ³⁴Hunter, *op.cit.*, p.114.
- ³⁵(Hunter) *Education Commission Report*, 1882 (Calcutta, 1883), pp. 498-99; cf. Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.42.
- ³⁶*ibid.*, *op.cit.*, pp.117-126.
- ³⁷*ibid.*, *op.cit.*, p.31.
- ³⁸Rafiuddin Ahmad, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*, OUP, Delhi, 1982, pp.10-11.
- ³⁹Imtiaz Ahmad, 'Ashraf and Ajlaf Categories in Indo-Muslim Society', *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol 2, No.19, (May 13, 1967), pp.887+889-891.
- ⁴⁰JayantiMaitra, *Muslim Politics in Bengal 1855-1906*, Calcutta, 1984, p.58.
- ⁴¹Syed Ahmad Khan, *Asbab-e Baghawat-e Hind*, 1859, Delhi reprint; see also S.Z.H. Jafri, 'The issue of religion in 1857: Three documents', in *SAGE*, Volume: 4 issue: 1, pages. 77-90.
- ⁴²Azizur Rahman Mallick, *op cit*, p.35.
- ⁴³*ibid.*, p.68.
- ⁴⁴P.Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.40.
- ⁴⁵*ibid.*, p.49.
- ⁴⁶Tazeen M. Murshid, *The Sacred and The Secular Bengal Muslim Discourses, 1871-1977*, OUP, 1995 p.46.
- ⁴⁷Muslims could not avail the benefits of situations as compared to their Hindus counterparts because of the socio-economic position Muslims used to have in Bengal during the earlier regimes. The wealthy and secured life of the preceding era did not make them feel the dangers of the upcoming rule. While the Hindus were careful to safeguard their rights under a foreign government, whether Muslims or British, they took greater care of their deeds and so fared better as compared to Muslim; Hunter, p. 183.; According to some scholars, the Muslims, with the usual indifference of a conquering race and in a sense of security had allowed their deeds to be destroyed or lost. Ameer Ali, 'A Cry from the Indian Mahomeddians, Nineteenth Century, Vol.XII, 1882 p.183.
- ⁴⁸BinoyGhosh, *Banglar Sidwat Samaj*, Calcutta, 1973, p.23 cf. T. M. Murshid, *op.cit.*, p.46.
- ⁴⁹Report on the Census of India 1901, vol. VI, p.484, cf. Sufia Ahmed, *op cit*, p.99.
- ⁵⁰*ibid.*, p.126.
- ⁵¹Table reproduced from Hunter, p. 126; a similar table for the period of 1881 is given by J.A.Bourdillon, Report on the Census of Bengal, 1881, Appendix C, Vol, HI, Table XXVII, P.769.
- ⁵²*ibid.*, 127-130.
- ⁵³Hunter, *op.cit.*, p.127.
- ⁵⁴*ibid.*, pp.117-8.

⁵⁵Rajesh Kochhar, Rajesh Kochhar, 'Seductive orientalism: English education and modern science in colonial India', *op.cit.*, pp. 45-63.

⁵⁶*ibid.*

⁵⁷Hunter, *op.cit.*, p.131.

⁵⁸R. Kochhar (2011) 'Muslims and English education in colonial Bengal: Calcutta Madrasa and Hooghly Mohsin College in a historical perspective', in: Hooghly College 175, pp. 17-39 (ed: S. K. Mukhopadhyay, Hooghly: Hooghly Mohsin College).

⁵⁹Hunter, *op.cit.*, pp.117-127.

⁶⁰P. Hardy, *op.cit.*, pp.64-75.

⁶¹Syed AsadMadani, *Jang-e Azadi me Jamait-ulUlama-e Hind kiKhidmat*; cf. YoginderSikand, *Bastions of the Believers Madarsas and Islamic Education in India*, Penguin, 2005, p. 68.

⁶²Azizur Rahman, *op.cit.*, p.71.

⁶³P. Hardy, *op.cit.*, p.60.

⁶⁴S. Z. H. Jafri, 'Ma'afidars and Institutions of Religious Learning in Colonial Bengal', *Vidyasagar University Journal*, 2016-17; I intent to involve here a weekly newspaper form Lucknow, *Tilism-e Lucknow*, which was started in May 1856 and continued till March 1857. It provided a lively picture of annexation of Awadh, showing the venom with which English destroyed Muslim elite prior to 1857; see Heena, 'Communitarian Relations, Colonial Remodeling and the British in Pre-Mutiny Awadh', in S.Z.H. Jafri ed. *Delhi and Awadh during 1857*, forthcoming 2019.

⁶⁵Hunter, *op. cit.*, p.117; Prof. Jafri noted that 'the data provided by Hunter was a huge embarrassment to the colonial authorities' and therefore they continued to question Hunter suggesting that 'Hunter's writings should be examined in the light of 'adopting contemporary official caveats'. See Peter Hardy, *op cit*, p.268 (interestingly no such 'caveats' have been cited by him).

⁶⁶W.W. Hunter,*op.cit*, p.139.

India's Act East Policy and North East India: A Focus on Connectivity and Cross Border Trade with Neighbouring Countries

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Abstract

The present Act East Policy of India was originally enunciated as Look East Policy of India. Act East Policy focuses on extended neighborhood in the Asia Pacific region. The objective of this policy is to promote economic co-operation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in Asia Pacific region. The North East Region (NER) has been a priority in the Act East Policy. This policy provides an interface between North East India and Asean region. The location of NER is such that it shares only 4 percent of its boundary with India whereas 96 percent is surrounded by various neighboring countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, China and Bhutan. This unique location of the region indicates that there is huge geo-economic potential related with NER. The Act East Policy can explore this potential of North East. This policy will foster connectivity and border trade which very significant for development of the region.

Introduction

An important foreign policy initiative of India in the post cold war period is Look East Policy which was launched in the year 1991 during the tenure of Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao. The introduction of this policy can be considered as the first serious effort towards the featuring of North East in the foreign policy of the country. Look East Policy has been one of the foremost attempts in our long term policy vision to open up the Indian economy for investment and trade with Southeast Asia. The aim of this policy was to forge close political link

and develop strong economic bonds with Southeast Asia. After the inhibition of this policy India became an active participant in various ASEAN organizations, becoming a Sectoral Dialogue Partner of ASEAN in 1992, a full ASEAN Dialogue Partner in 1996, and also a member of the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) in 1996 (Lee 2015).

In the first phase of Look East Policy, trade and investment accelerated between India and Asean. Exports rise from US\$ 2.9 billion in 2000 to US\$ 19.1 billion in 2009 and imports rose from US\$ 4.1 billion to US\$ 26.2 billion during the same period. The second phase of the policy is marked by increased defense diplomacy along with Free Trade Agreements. This phase focuses on the development of trade and investment linkages with the members of ASEAN (Sanghamitra, 2018). The Look East policy (LEP) has continued to enjoy energetic supports from the successive administration of Indra Kumar Gujral (1997-98), Atal Bihari Vajpayee (1998-2004), Manmohan Singh (2004-14), Narendra Modi (2014-Now), although each of them represent different political ideology. The concepts of extended neighborhoods were introduced by Vajpayee govt. which declared country's concern and interaction go well beyond South Asia.

The present government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has rebranded Look East Policy as Act East Policy signifying a more productive and action packed policy towards Asia pacific region (Sanghamitra, 2018). In 2011, the then US Secretary of state Hillary Clinton visited India and advocated for India to play stronger role in the Asia-Pacific region. Actually she coined the term 'Act East' instead of just 'Look East' (Ashok Brahma, 2018). Act East policy may be considered as a major foreign policy upgradation on the part of the Indian Government in 2014 with multidimensional ramification. It gave a new look to the decade old Look East Policy, not only making it more proactive and result oriented but also encompassing several related aspects of international relation with the Countries of East and South East Asia. Most important thing is that under Act East Policy North Eastern Region would be the centre stage of the countries relation with east, especially Asean block. Act East Policy expands the definition of the East to include Australia and Japan thereby making a shift from only exchange of trade to include economic, strategic and security issues.

Objectives and Methods

If the India's Act East Policy is successfully implemented North Eastern States would be the focal point between Indian hinterlands and East Asian country. So the North Eastern region would be primary beneficiary of this policy. The Act

East Policy has enhanced the prospect of border trade for North Eastern region with neighbouring and South Asian countries. On connectivity front, the Act East policy envisages opening up of the land locked North Eastern Region to the external world through alternative pathways traversing the ASEAN bloc and Bangladesh, Myanmar and Bhutan. This study is an attempt to analyse the present status and the prospect of connectivity and Border trade of NER in context of Act East Policy and challenges that arises in this regard. For the purpose of this study, 'India's Act East Policy and North East India: A focus on connectivity and cross border trade with neighbouring countries'. Here an analytical study was made. The information and data have been collected from secondary sources like books, journals, internet sources, published research papers and articles.

Analysis & Discussions: Connectivity: Prospects and Challenges

The objective of Act East Policy is to promote economic co-operation, cultural ties and develop strategic relationship with countries in the Asia Pacific region. India places ASEAN in the heart of its Act East Policy and the centre of the dream of an Asian Country. India was making efforts on all fronts to enhance physical and digital connectivity with ASEAN. The renewed focus of the Act East Policy is evident in the extensive high level visits by Indian President, Vice President and Prime Minister to nine of ten ASEAN state and invitation of ten ASEAN head of the state for republic day parade.

Within the framework of Act East Policy three critical initiatives have been identified to promote connectivity of North Eastern region with ASEAN bloc and South East Asia, viz Trilateral highway between India, Myanmar and Thailand, the Asian highway Network and Kaladan multi-model project (Deepjyoti Gogoi, 2018). India helped Myanmar in completing 160km of Tamu-Kalewa-Kalemyo sector of the proposed trilateral highway that seeks to link India with Myanmar and Thailand. Portion of the 1360km of trilateral highway from Moreh (India) to Maesot (Thailand) through Began (Myanmar) have already become functional which will help in connecting North Eastern Region to fast developing Asean Road Network (Bhattacharjee, 2018).

By pursuing the Mekong India Economic Corridor Project India seek to get access to Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. Under framework of Act East Policy it is possible to reconstruct steel well road that connects Yunnan region of China with India through North-east India (OKDISCD, 2015). Port accessibility is a vital prerequisite for sustained growth of export. Having access to nearby ports in neighbouring countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar would open up world for the Industries and businesses in North-eastern Region. In this context for ensuring

smooth access to Chittagong port in Bangladesh, the road from Guwahati to Chittagong via Shillong and Dawki need to be developing as expressway.

There is a great potentiality of air link between Capital city of Assam and ASEAN and neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan and Myanmar. The arial distance of the capitals of most of the ASEAN countries and neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Myanmar from Guwahati is much less than the arial distance of Guwahati with the major city of the country like Delhi, Mumbai, Bangaluru, Chennai etc. Considering this, direct flight can be introduced between the capital of ASEAN countries and South East Asian countries with Guwahati, the gateway of North East. (Sazzd Alam, 2019).

However, there are many challenges of enhancing connectivity of NER with South East Asia. Opening up of more roads, railways and waterways through Myanmar with South East Asian countries are sure to bring drugs, illegal migrants, arms and ammunition more easily in larger volumes than before. Moreover, North-east India has been facing the problem of insurgency which is a big challenge to physical connectivity because the roads would pass through areas where militants like ULFA, NSCN are operating. Again the hilly terrain of NER and the neighbouring Countries leads to high unit cost of constructing roads and railways in the region.

Cross Border Trade: Prospects and Challenges

The North East India share 4 percent of its boundary with main land and 96 percent with neighbouring countries of China, Nepal, and Bhutan in the North, Bangladesh in the South west and Myanmar in the North. Therefore this region has immense potential for cross border trade. The North Eastern Region has vast potential resources. The region is endowed with rich water resources, mineral resources like coal, petroleum and natural gas, limestone etc, forest wealth, horticulture, herbs and medicinal plants. The region has huge potential to generate hydro power (40,000 mw) and if fully harnessed the region could become a major powerhouse not only for India but also neighbouring countries. Act East Policy of India is being projected as the new economic development strategy for NER in terms of increased trade, investment and tourism. With the implementation of Act East Policy many prospects for North East India will open, especially in trade. Firstly, there is considerable scope of improving trade in certain local products such as tea, spices, agro food processing, natural rubber, handloom and handicrafts. Secondly, this policy will help in legalizing informal trade along the border and encourage the trading partners to expand their business. Thirdly, there are prospects for North East India to enjoy spin off efforts from trade by developing certain sectors like transport and communication, tourism, banking and insurance. If all these potentials are harvested

it will not only generate job opportunities but will also result in economic development of the region.

Although NER share long international border with neighbouring countries, but the cross border trade of the region with the neighbouring countries through land route is abysmally low. It is infact less than 1 percent of the total mutual trade of these countries with India. There are several factors for such a sorry state of affairs.

Firstly, there are several tariff and non-tariff barriers on the trade with countries like Bangladesh and Myanmar. This may be due to security consideration and apprehension that freer trade would enable smuggling of items like weapons, counterfeit currencies, drugs etc. Secondly, the multilateral South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) has quite adversely affected the goods trade with Bangladesh. The custom duties imposed by Bangladesh on import from India are very high, perhaps done to ease unfavourable Balance of Trade (BOT) of Bangladesh. But that has very adversely affected the trade with North East. Thirdly, the facilities at Land Custom Stations (LCS) and integrated checkpoint through which the North Eastern Region harbours its land route trade with Myanmar in South East Asia is definitely not upto the mark. They actually hamper rather than facilitate border trade. Out of 42 notified Land Custom Stations (LCS) only 26 are presently functional. Even in the functional stations the facilities seems to be very poor (Sazad Alam, 2019). Some of the land custom stations are shown in the following table.

Country	LCS in NER
Bangladesh	Agartala, Bholaiganj, Borsora, Doh, Ghasupara, Golokganj, Karingganj, Sengmarghat, Mahendraganj, Markachar, Mani, Old Ragsabazar, Shillabazar, Srimantganj, Saurkhandi.
Bhutan	Hatisar
China	Sheerdang (Nathula)
Myanmar	Moreh, Zawkhathur, Newpong, Arungkhua
*Nepal	Borsora, Chasuparah, Doh, Druki, Karingganj and Mahendraganj.

The opening of trade with South East Asian countries as visualized in the India's Look East Policy could certainly add some vigor to the land locked and lean economy of NER. The prosperous East and South East Asian countries are alternate destination for Indian export. Asean markets provide big opportunities for India. Besides, most of ASEAN population has similar cultural background as India does. Given the geopolitical situation of the NER cross border markets are likely to be most cost effective business for surplus production of the region and also for imports of some consumable items in comparison to dealing in faraway mainland markets.

From the border point of Arunachal Pradesh, export of India could reach by the Steel well road to Kunming in South China nearly thousands miles within two days, Yangon in Myanmar within two and half days, Bangkok in four days and Singapore in five/six days. The North East Region, with its locational advantage could emerge as a business transit center for both the SAARC and Asean countries. In this regard the region will have the potential to become the hub for future growth engine of Asia. India's border trade via North Eastern Region with neighbouring countries (2017-18) is shown in the following table.

Country	Total bilateral trade by all modes (US\$ million)	Bilateral cross border trade (US\$ million)	Share of bilateral border trade in total trade in %
Bangladesh	9300	172	1.85
Bhutan	924	23	2.49
China	89,714	2	0.002
Myanmar	1,606	0.02	00
Nepal	7,051	0.0	00
Total	1,08,595	197.02	0.181

Source: Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), Govt. of India.

The North East India is well known for its biodiversity and heritage site. Tawang in Arunachal Pradesh, Majuli, Kaziranga, Pabitora, Manas, Haflong and Jatinga etc. in Assam can be developed further as tourist spots attracting more tourists from Europe, America and other parts of the world. Under the framework of Act East Policy if the connectivity of this region is developed than most of the western and Japanese tourists visiting South East Asian Region would drive a few hundred kilometers more to enjoy the scenic beauty and cultural beauties of North Eastern region. This alone can boost the economy of entire North Eastern Region. Tea industry being a leading industry encourages the growth of several ancillary industries like plywood, saw-mills, bought leaf factories etc. The tea industries of North East can find new outlets for exporting its product to the South East Asian countries, if such regional co-operation is built up as visualized in Act East Policy.

Several rivers big and small having high gradients are flowing across the region, which are suitable to construct hydro projects to generate electricity. The National Hydro-Electric Power Corporation (NHPC) has been constructing several mega multipurpose hydro-electrical power projects in upper reaches of Brahmaputra river in Arunachal Pradesh, estimated to generate thousands megawatt of power.

The project includes Subanshiri upper, lower and middle, Dihing, Dibang and Siang hydro projects. If these are built up properly a major part of the generated power can be exported to neighbouring countries.

Conclusion

Look East Policy rebranded as Act East Policy is an integral part of North Eastern Region vision 2020, a roadmap for development of the region. In context of India's growing and evolving relations with South East Asia, it is inevitable that North Eastern Region would be pivotal for over all Act East Policy given its geographic proximity and socio-cultural and historic ties with South East Asian Region. This policy will foster connectivity and border trade which is very significant for a region which is mostly surrounded by international border.

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Impact of Buddhism in the Social Life of People of Ancient Bengal (c. 5th C.E. to 12th Century C.E.)

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Abstract

The present paper discusses the impact of Buddhism on the social life of ancient Bengal during the period from c. 5th C.E. to 12th century C.E. This period was significant from many points of view as far as Buddhism is concerned in Bengal. We saw the last glory of the Buddhism in India during this period and there was a total transformation in the social relations. It was the period when feudalism was raising its head in Bengal and there was a great transformation in the Buddhist faith also. Thus this period was a transitional one from ancient to medieval which witnessed many changes in the social conditions and religious faiths in Bengal. Society is not only the caste system also every day life of the people. So keeping in mind the importance of the Buddhist structures from the religious and social point of view an attempt has been made in this paper. We make out that the social history of religious institution requires interdisciplinary come up to untiring the regions of religious and social study of particular region and period. What was the role of Kings, Queens, householder, Merchants, common people, laymen in the monastery and why the large number of Buddhist monastery became a great learning centre in ancient Bengal mainly discussed in this paper. This is a place where combined the efforts of both historians of religion and social historians can lead to successful results.

The present paper discusses the impact of Buddhism on the social life of ancient Bengal during the period from c. 5th C.E. to 12th century C.E. This period was significant from many points of view as far as Buddhism is concerned in Bengal. We saw the last glory of the Buddhism in India during this period and there was a total transformation in the social relations. It was the period when feudalism was raising its head in Bengal and there was a great transformation in the Buddhist faith also. Thus this period was a transitional one from ancient to medieval which witnessed many changes in the social conditions and religious faiths in Bengal. This paper is mainly based on original sources though several secondary sources also have been consulted. Keeping in mind the importance of the Buddhist structures from the religious and social point of view an attempt has been made in this paper. We make out that the social history of religious institution requires interdisciplinary come up to untiring the regions of religious and social study of particular region and period. This is a place where combined the efforts of both historians of religion and social historians can lead to successful results.¹

The starting point of influence of Buddhism in the social life of the people may be fixed at the notion of *viharas*, which was the dwelling of monks. Formerly implying a private residence of single Bhikkhu, a *vihara* later on came to mean a large and complex structure for the accommodation of a community of monks, where they can peacefully meditate and be engaged in canonical studies. Thus we have the following in the *Chullavagga*: To give *viharas* to the *Sangha* where, in safety and in peace, to meditate and think at ease, the Buddha calls the best of gift. Let then the able man, regarding his own weal, have pleasant monasteries built and lodge their learned men. Naturally enough the *viharas* started as associations of learned men whose duty it was to educate the junior monks residing with them in the same monastery in the teachings of the Buddha.

We get a clear picture regarding Asoka's patronization towards Buddhism in Bengal from the account of Chinese traveler I-tsing. It is known that Bengal had ancient link with Sri Lanka, Tibet and China. From the 4th century C.E. the Chinese travelers Fa-hien, Hiuen-tsang and I-tsing travelled in Bengal and recorded valuable accounts on contemporary society.

In Buddhism, every senior monks or Bhikkhu was required to take a student and instruct him in the art of recitation, explain the *dharma*, make exhortation and periodically test the students' progress and performance. With the growing need for the spread of the religion, the laity who did not belong to the order and were called the *upasakas* were accepted as pupils for the benefit of instruction in the monastery, and the subjects of instruction were gradually liberalized to include secular studies like grammar, philosophy, medicine, astronomy and various other arts and sciences. Likewise, the monastery itself with its complex structure and

managerial paraphernalia was a veritable workshop and a school for arts and crafts. As a body of teachers and students residing in the same building or campus and jointly engaged in the business of learning the Buddhist monastic institutions were destined to develop as universities, of which the best examples were set by Nalanda, Somapura, Jagaddala, Mainamati, Mogalmari and several other places. These structures became famous centres of Buddhist learning with which the composition and translation of many of these Tantric works are associated. Some of the great Buddhist scholars like Santideva, Dipankara Srijnana, etc. belonged to this period and created many works concerning religion, grammar, philosophy, logic, etc.

It is important to note that, formerly the dwellings place or monastery for monk was a centre of learning and study. If we see from the Gupta period Nalanda was an important centre for learning. Also it was a great university during the time of Hiuen-tsang. He stayed five years in Nalanda and studied in this university. Its educational curriculum integrated Brahmanical and Buddhist teachings, sacred and secular, philosophical and practical, sciences and arts. Hiuen-tsang mention that the students at Nalanda 'study the great Vehicle, and also the works belonging to the eight sects of Hinayana Buddhism, also even ordinary works, for example the *Vedas* and other books, the *Hetuvidya*, the *Sabdavidya*, the *Chikitsavidya*, the works on magic or *Atharvaveda*, the *Samkhya*; further these they comprehensively examine the different works.²

Kumaragupta Mahendraditya established the great *vihara* of Nalanda which in course of time turned into a university and became the greatest centre of Buddhist learning in Asia. It is also noticed that from an early date the Buddhists of Bengal were closely linked with this great institution, not only scholars from Bengal but also its kings contributed to the development of the great institutions. The Mauryan and the Gupta king ruled this country from the 3rd century B.C.E. to the 5th C.E. At that time the people of the Hindu and the Buddhist religious faiths lived small in number. The religious attitudes of the Buddhist were liberal; whereas Brahmin Senas were conservative and narrow.

Like Nalanda *mahavihara* Somapura *mahavihara* also was a great Buddhist Monastery, bears the sign of rich history of educational and culture centres of ancient Bengal. It is one of the oldest and the biggest university of Asia 1400 years back. Among the five important universities of ancient time Vikramashila, Nalanda, Somapura, Odantapura, and Jaggadala were interlinked under same network and administration. It was an important centre for practicing Buddhism. Before the site was discovered and excavated, it was a 'pahar' or hill'. From this name it's known as Paharpur monastery. The University used to teach theology, grammar, logic, philosophy, fine arts and it was visited by many famous scholars.

The residential university enrolled students free of costs and their clothing and food were also free. About one hundred adjacent villages supplied food and clothing for about 2,000 students living in 177 rooms in a 21 acre fortified complex area. Students from south-east Asian countries like Korea, Mongolia, China and Tibet came here to receive the superior quality of education provided by this university. The books preserved in the library were made of parchment paper and palm leaves. But the library was looted and ravaged after the fall of the Pala dynasty.³ The main complex has 177 rooms or cells where the monks and scholars used to live and study.

The Jagaddala *mahavihara* was established in the beginning of the twelfth century by king Rama Pala of Bengal on the banks of the *Gangas* and the Karatoya in Varendra country. It was swept out of existence by Bukhtyar's hoards in 1203 C.E. Within this short period the university produced a number of well-known scholars such as Vibhutipandra, Danasila, Subhakara and Moksakaragupta, some of whom were also good Tibetan scholars. So that it was became a seat of learning in Varendra, a geographical division in present North Bengal.⁴ The Tibetan records mentioned that, among the five important Buddhist monasteries stood out Vikramasila, Nalanda earlier period its major but still well-known Somapura, Odantapura and Jagaddala. The five great *mahaviharas* created a set of connections; all of them were under state supervision and their survived a system of co-ordinations among them. It appears from the indication that the dissimilar seats of learning that purposes in eastern India under the Pala dynasty were regarded together as forming a network interlinked group of institutions and it was common for great scholars to move from position to position among them.⁵ It will be noted that Mainamati and Chittagong also became seats of Buddhist Philosophy and thought which is indicated by the epigraphic and literary data.⁶

The Buddhist sites of Chittagong and the adjacent region are known at least from the 7th century C.E. as Harikela. The region was renowned among the archaeologist as a significant centre of Buddhist teaching and learning so that creates a centre of attention to Chinese Buddhist monks, who came to India to study Buddhism. According to I-tsing's memoirs of 56 well-known priests or Buddhist converts who visited India and the neighborhood from China and bordering districts during the latter half of the 7th century C.E.⁷ He had resides there for one year before he went to Mahabodhi (Bodhgaya). It emerges that the country must have had important centres of Buddhist learning to support this monk to remain there for one year. It will be noted that from the same source another Chinese monk Tan-kwong, came to India by the southern sea-route, arrived at *A-li-ki-lo* (Harikela) and

found much favour with the king of the country. He got a temple built at the place and ultimately expired there.⁸

The Buddhist sites in Chittagong endured to play a vital role as an education centre is further evidenced by periodic references in the late Tibetan works. Therefore, Lama Taranath, the famous Tibetan historian of Buddhism, in his account mentioned a monastery named the Pinda-vihara in the town of Chatighabo in Bhamgala in the context of introducing the practice of wearing pointed caps by the monk-scholars (*Panditas*) of the monastery as a means of winning in a debate against a number of *tirthika* devotees.⁹ The similar story of implementation of the practice of wearing pointed caps by the *Panditas* has also been referred to by Sarat Chandra Das¹⁰ on the source of the Tibetan works. But according to him, the name of the large monastery where the religious debate took place was the Pandita-vihara (instead of Pinda-vihara), and it become placed in the city of Chatigrama or Chatigaon (present day Chittagong). During that time Chittagong had many *tirthika* temples and *viharas* of the Buddhists who belonged to the Tantrika Mahayana School.

Tamralipta was an important Buddhist educational centre. Fa-hien, Hiuen-tsang visited in this site and saw many monasteries and thousand of monks. Tachengteng, a pupil of Hiuen-tsang, also visited Tamralipta and stayed there for twelve years and acquired great knowledge of Sanskrit texts, when he was residing here in a *vihara*, called *Poloho*.¹¹ Taolin, an another Chinese pilgrimage also visited Tamralipta and lived there for three years, for learning Sanskrit and also himself initiated to the Sarvastivada School.¹² These two Chinese travelers also corroborated the evidence furnished by Hiuen-tsang about Tamralipta. I-tsing came to India in 671 C.E. and stayed up to 695 C.E. He also visited Tamralipta and saw five or six monasteries there.¹³ I-tsing met *Tachengteng* in a monastery called *Bharaha* and spent some time there, and learned Sanskrit and *Savdavidya*. He gave a detailed account of this monastery with its administration and organisation. He also translated a Sanskrit Buddhist text the Nagarjuna *Bodhisattava Suhrillekha* into Chinese language there.¹⁴ It thus appears that from the beginning of the 5th century till the third quarter of 7th century C.E. there was a steady decrease of monasteries in Tamralipta. So we can say that Tamralipta was an important role in society for the development of Buddhist education.

Hiuen-tsang arrived in Tamralipta during the reign of Harshavardhana. According to him, its range was somewhere between 250-300 miles. Tamralipta was highly developed in the field of socio-economic and moral values in addition to architecture. Then it set up business relationship with distant China, Subrnadiwip, Malay, Persia and Arabia along with western states like Greece and thus emerged as an international port city.¹⁵

Newly discovered Buddhist site Mogalmari was also became a learning centre in Bengal. If we see the huge monastic complex it is clear that the period of

the construction of Mogalmari monastery in Bengal regions was initially a 6th century establishment with a simple but massive construction of 9th 10th century C.E. From the architectural point of view this site marked by remarkable development in the style of architecture, art and sculpture. Terracotta art in the walls exemplify development of secular arts reflecting life, nature, structure and social scene of those day.

During the early medieval period saw a noteworthy increment in the number of temple in different parts of India. Here we can refer to the case of South India where temples assume an essential job amid the period concerned. Archaeological evidences mainly from inscriptions of South India from 10th century C.E. beyond designate an amplify in royal patronage of temples. Sanctuaries were for the most part upheld by the land gifts. Temples were additionally developed in provincial territories other than those skilled by the imperial family. These temples went about as religious establishment as well as assumed an imperative social job in the provincial zones. This can be seen in the implementation of the larger temples in the rural areas. As an institution, the temple became the location for many kinds of routine exchange, the focal point for many professions to whom the temple gave employment either directly or indirectly, a symbol of authority as a landlord who could interfere in the lives of rural people, a rural bank, a channel of various forms of legitimating and, not least, the focus of a particular sectarian religion.¹⁶

What role did the Buddhist monasteries play in the village areas? Did the Buddhist monasteries of Bengal have social role like the Brahmanical temples in the village areas? At present we have few confirmations available to us which throws light on the issue. I-tsing, the renowned Chinese traveler who came to India in the seventh century C.E. states that most Indian religious communities having lands had them developed by workers and others. According to him the monasteries provided the oxen and the fields and generally received one-sixth of the produce which was the same as the conservative split allocated to the state.¹⁷ With generous endowments and village folk at their disposal, the Buddhist *viharas*, like the Brahmanical temples, turned into landlords. Generally such huge religious communities would not have prospered in ancient Bengal.

The most important social role of the Buddhist monasteries was mainly in education, secular and spiritual. The monastery was the educational centre where most of the boys of the locality from the age of six had to spend a few years. Therefore the monks, in their traditional role as the custodians of the learning of the past and the teachers of each new generation, imparted to the boys elementary knowledge of Buddhism and of simple reading and writing.¹⁸ The learning system

appears to have been the main source of influence of the monasteries over the masses. Yet, without concrete sources we cannot unquestionably say that the Buddhist monasteries of Bengal like Burmese play an important social role in the field of education. In view of the fact that monasteries of Bengal gradually became centre of learning and it can be assumed that they had some social role to play in the field of education.¹⁹

Apart from the educational services the monasteries also played vital role in molding the moral value of the individuals. From the monasteries and its sculptures we can understand the social life of the people. From the sculptures of Paharpur, it is noticed that men of that time wore dhoti, generally shorter and narrower than that worn by the Bengalis of the present day. The usual mode of wearing the dhoti was different from the present fashionable mode. The women wore saris in the same way as the males wore, but they were much longer and reached the ankle. The *saris* like the *dhoti* never covered the upper part of the body which generally remained exposed, though sometimes it was partially covered by a long narrow scarf called *uttariya* or *odhni*. In addition, the women covered the upper part of their body by *coli* (blouse). The saris and dhotis were embroidered with various designs.²⁰

From the observation we can say that men and women both used same types of ornaments. From the sculptures of couple in Paharpur relief have each large ear-pendant, two lines of necklaces, armlets, bracelets, anklets, etc.²¹ Neither men nor women used any covering for the head, though the Paharpur sculptures show that they elaborately dressed their hair.

The status of women in Buddhism as exposed in inscription is an important subject to discuss about the social history of ancient Bengal. But it is very difficult to draw a complete picture of social life of women exclusively from epigraphic sources. The interesting information's supplied by these inscriptions are required to be studied in order to get a full and fair picture of the social position of women in those days. It is to be noted that, these epigraphic sources are also supported by contemporary literary accounts. Women played an important role in Buddhist society for the settlement of marriages, management of household affairs, proprietary rights, education and the progress of the fine arts, etc. Most of the social customs in the society of ancient Bengal were almost like the present days customs.²²

Apart from warriors, no figure in Paharpur sculptures is symbolized with any footwear, which makes us believe that it was perhaps not in common use at that time. The tradition of married women marking their forehead with vermilion is noticeable from the sculptures. The women also marked their lower lips with vermilion, used saffron as a ornamental and decorated their feet with lac.²³

According to the excavated result from Mainamati Buddhist sites we found two types of metal object, which possibly used by the persons those who lived in

monastery. The first group includes ornaments of gold, silver and bronze. These are mainly finger rings and earrings of gold, bronze bangles and circular pieces of silver ingots. These objects, recovered from the cells of the Salban *Vihara* in association with the silver coins, indicate the prosperous condition of the life style of monastery people.²⁴ These were perhaps presented to the monks as offering by the devotees. Other than bangles, bronze objects include a large number of utensils used in day to day life. These are cooking pots, plates, dishes, spoons and religious pots like *Kosha-Kushi*. These objects are not different from those used in modern times. Similarly iron objects recovered from Salban *Vihara* which is almost similar to those used in present times. These include nails, hinges, chains, fish-hooks, digging tools, knife, blades and *Da* (cutter), etc.²⁵

A massive numbers of potteries were exposed from all the excavated sites. But the largest number of those came from the first and second construction and reconstruction period of Salban *Vihara*. Some of these wares were found in association with fire-places surrounded by the cells of the monastery. Most important characteristics of these wares are their under baked, whitish soft fabrics, often bearing traces of red slip. These wares are mainly shallow round base cooking pots with knobbed covers. Beside these cooking pots, other wares include water pitchers and drinking goblets, plates, bowls and shallow dishes, lids of cooking pots and bowls, spouted vessels, sprinklers, flared-mouth vase, large size storage jars and large number of oil lamps with stands.

A medium sized perforated jar with lid, found in Salban *Vihara* was perhaps used for preparing medicines in vapor. Special mention may be made of some small pieces of a jar. Few fragments of a storage jar bear some *Deva-nagari* scripts, which could not yet be clearly deciphered.²⁶ A number of minor objects also recovered from the excavated sites of Mainamati. Its throw light on the everyday life of the monastery people of the region. These are fossilized wood, glass, shell objects and large-sized bricks. Large-sized tile bricks are numerous and two of these bricks bring to us a touch of reality as one of them bears the foot impressions of an adult and a child and the other contains foot impression of a cow. From these points of view we can say that every day life of Buddhist monastic people belongs with prosperous life.

Merchant community played an important role in the Buddhist monastic society. There is a close relationship between Buddhism and trade which is largely due to the dependence of the Buddhist monastic community on donations from lay supporters.²⁷ Ideally, Buddhist monks and nuns were required to reject all worldly possessions and thus to depend on the lay community for supply of all their necessities, including food, clothing, shelter, and medicine. In practice, donations to Buddhist monasteries included a wide range of materials necessary to maintain

the monks and nuns. There were the needs of considerable economic surpluses to sustain large-scale Buddhist institutions. In return for material donations to Buddhist monasteries, monks and nuns were available to give religious instruction and donors received religious merit (*punya*), which was often shared with relatives, teachers, political supporters, and 'all beings' (*sarvasattva*).

It minutely shows the advantage of the Brahmanical religion in the territory concerned. The Brahmanas grantees played a vital role in the region of their settlement. They served as a link between other castes. As the pioneers, they could profitably remold the landscape to agrarian requirements. This was a clear contrast to Buddhist monastery which was constructed in an area that had a living, sedentary agricultural society, was capable to maintain the establishments on where there was a sufficient commercial activity for communities to maintain monastic centre. Even the grant of revenue or land were given to Buddhist monastery situated more frequently villages or land that were already under cultivation. Actually monks were not the pioneer of agricultural change although they worked as supervisors in different capacities relating to the income and the better functioning of the *Sanghas*. It is exact to say that the monks were expected to play the possible role of being recipient of alms and donation.²⁸ This could have separated; if not alienated, Buddhism form a society changing its system. It seemed to us that during the time of 11th-12th century CE had stopped to function its social role in the Buddhist monasteries areas and this was the main causes of the destruction in Bengal.

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**Revisiting the Issue of Women Participation in Quit India
Movement
A Study of Present Jorhat District of Assam**

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Abstract

Participation of women in Freedom Movement is a noteworthy issue of colonial Assam history. Till the colonial period very few women involvement in public space can be seen due to the existing social norms as well as physiological traumas of the society. However, unprecedented women participation was visible in Assam during colonial period especially in Freedom Movement. Being inspired the contemporary nationalist trends, women of Assam did not keep themselves aloof from the mainstream of the movement and like their male counterpart, they participated in the every phases of the Freedom Movement. Likewise the other anti colonial movement, the women of Assam once again showed their valor and courage in historic Quit India Movement by participating in the different tasks of the movement. This tendency of women participation was also visible in present Jorhat district of Assam during Quit India Movement. For the greater interest of the motherland they shouldered different critical tasks.

History generally records the issues related to male, whereas the agency of women and their issues are neglected in historical narratives. Gerda Lerner, a pioneer of development of women history said ‘The unawareness of their own history of struggle and achievement has been one of the major means of keeping women subordinate’.¹ However, the process revisiting the history of Indian women especially their political participation and their rights had been began with post 1975 India’s women’s movement. Similarly in Assam after 1975, under the initiative

of some women's literary organization like the Lekhika Samaroh and the Lekhika Santha the process of revisiting the women's past had been developed. Moreover, some individual effort had also been taken by some Assamese women like Chandraprava Saikiani, Nalinibala Devi, Rajabala Das and others who had recorded their own experiences. However, much about their participation in public sphere as well as achievements was reflected in the pages of *Ghar Jeuti*, first women magazine published in Assamese language.²

As it is known that in spite of women from the women of blue blood families, the women of ancient and medieval Assam period were always projected at the inferior places of society. Even in the beginning of the modern period they had to follow the patriarchal norms of the society. Once, Chandraprava Saikiani said, 'Now a day's many serious problems are plaguing in the society'. In this new age of change, the questions of duties of women have become a serious question. Whether they are to stay confined to household compound or apart from it they have some duties? We the women are still uncertain about our duties, or what are its limits'.³ Due to the influence of western education as well as new socio-political development, the Assamese nationalist also tried to uplift the women condition by articulating different reforms related to women. However, the women of Assam got the hitherto untrodden ground to participate in the public space during Indian Freedom Struggle which reached its height during historic Quit India Movement, 1942.

Hence, in this study, the history of Freedom Movement in Assam particularly the involvement of women has been dealt with. In doing so, recent historiographical developments have been taken into consideration. The research work is mainly focused on the role played by women of Assam especially of present Jorhat district during historic Quit India Movement. It is observed that along with the male counterpart, the women of Jorhat also participated in the Quit India Movement embellishing the stereotype patriarchal views.

In view of this perspective, both analytical and descriptive historical methodology has been used. Primary sources are collected through interview with the freedom fighters of the region in the form of oral history and the archival data. Secondary sources are collected from books, journals etc. available here and there.

Amongst the pertinent issues of Assam history, the participation of people of Assam in Indian freedom struggle is a significance issue of discussion. Being influenced by the contemporary nationalist trend, people of Assam had participated in different phases of Indian Freedom Struggle which reached its height during historic Quit India Movement, 1942. Under the guidance of A.P.C.C. (Assam Pradeshik Congress Committee) people of Assam once again showed their patriotism by participating in different tasks of the movement. Moreover, the colonial authority tried to reduce the tempo of the movement by declaring A.P.C.C. and its subsidiary

bodies as illegal.⁴ However, this strategy could not deter the people of Assam from joining in the movement and therefore, it became a mass movement in Assam. Like in other parts of the country, the women of Assam understood the Gandhian concept 'Do or Die' in its widest meanings and therefore, in this historic Quit India Movement women of Assam had shouldered different critical responsibilities and some women like Konaklata Baruah, Bhugeswari Phukonani sacrificed their lives for the greater interest of the motherland. This tendency of women participation was strikingly visible in Jorhat region of Assam. During Quit India Movement, women of this region not only participated in the programmes of the movement rather they had also been involved themselves in the process of mass mobilization against the colonial authority. This unprecedented participation of women not only enhanced the tempo of the movement, but also had helped them a lot in terms of their participation in public sphere. Women of Jorhat understood the Gandhian concept of 'Do or Die' in its widest meaning and therefore, considering it as their moral responsibility, they took part in different programmes of the movement at different capacities. However, some women of this region had also involved in the underground resistance movement.

The patriarchy as well as physiological traumas regarding women still dominated the society of Jorhat and the women of this region were also never for a moment in history unbounded by patriarchy. At this crucial time, it was not an easy task for the women of Jorhat to disregard such social limitations for the greater interest of their motherland. However, due to the Gandhian appeal as well as ongoing nationalism compelled them to negotiate with the male dominated patriarchal norms. Therefore, women of present Jorhat district came out from their household and enhanced the tempo of the movement.

During the historic Quit India Movement, District Congress Committee, and its women wing acted as the guiding force for the women in Jorhat. The conveners of the women cell were Subarnalata Hazarika, Bhanu Borthakur, Tilaka Saikia and Bindu Pasoni Dutta. They led the womenfolk of the region in different anti-colonial programmes. Moreover, Bonti Baruah, an educated widow had also made remarkable contributions in the Quit India Movement in Jorhat by disseminating the idea of nationalism among the women of Jorhat. Like other women of this region, Nisiprava Bhuyan of Bongalpukhuri also played noteworthy role in mass mobilization.⁵

Picketing in front of government buildings was another important agenda of the Quit India Movement in Assam and along with their male counterpart, the women of Assam were actively involved in the course of the movement. In order to draw the attention of government officials, women of Jorhat picketed government offices several times in the course of the movement. On 22th September, 1942, a

group of women from the adjoining areas of Jorhat picketed in front of Jorhat Bar Library for about half an hour. In this case Dinanath Saikia, a student of class nine of Jorhat Bezbaruah School, was arrested due to his instigation of other students. However, he was released within a very short period of time.⁶

Very interestingly, carrying the congress messages from one place to another was a very critical task for the congress volunteers during the Quit India Movement. Therefore, the congress leaders appointed some women of Jorhat to carry congress messages. In this context, the names of Sudhalata Dutta and Reboti Lahon were noteworthy. They often used to travel long distances on foot in order to carry the secret messages from one place to another.⁷ As women of Jorhat participated in this movement very actively and therefore, they had been molested by the British police in different ways. However, in order to challenge the colonial government, participation of women was very necessary from that point of time. Therefore, to protect themselves from police molestation, some self-defense training had been provided to the womenfolk of Jorhat. Moreover, some small weapons had also been provided to the girls who took part in this mass movement.⁸

Participation of women in different anti colonial procession was another important aspect of Quit India Movement in Jorhat. According to the report on atrocities committed in 1942, on 27th September 1942, a big public procession of about 2000 people was carried out, in which about 200 women took part. In order to bring the situation under control, the police Sub-Inspector (S.I.), Hem Rajkhowa and his police force resorted to the *lathi* and bayonet charge on the agitators, in which women like Srijukta Ratneswari, Smta Nanibala Saikia, and Smta Umakanti Rai Baruah, were seriously injured. In the same case Ratneswari was seriously injured with bayonet charge at her chest by a police constable named Jahara.⁹ In the same case, apart from the above mentioned women participants, the names of Maibala Baruah, Aideu Bala Baruah, Aidhani Saikia, Ratnakanti Rai Baruah, Purbeswari Doloi, Devajani Baruah, and Aiti Baruah, are also worth mentioning. In the bayonet charge, Maibala Baruah's blouse was torn. In such a way for the greater interest of their motherland, women of Jorhat sacrificed a lot.¹⁰

As it is known that the *Mahila Samities* (women's committee) played an important role in terms of disseminating the ideas of the movement amongst the womenfolk of Assam. This scenario had also been noticed in present Jorhat district during Quit India Movement. In Jorhat district *Mahila Samiti* played vital role regarding the development of mass mobilization in different interior places of Jorhat. The leaders and members of the Jorhat *Mahila Samiti* went place to place and

of Basanti Bordoloi is noteworthy in this context. Being the leader of Jorhat *Mahila Samiti*, she went to different villages of Jorhat and established the *Mahila Samities* in such villages. She also had participated in the procession from Pakamura and Panisokua to Jorhat with her son on her lap.¹¹ Moreover, during that time, the bulletins and leaflets played an important role in propagating the messages as well as plans of Congress among the masses and women of Jorhat played an important role in this regard. In fact, some women of Teok were caught red-handed by the police in their involvement in the distribution of Congress bulletins and leaflets in various places of the region. They even helped their male counterpart in writing the Congress bulletins and leaflets during the course of the movement.¹² On 6 March of 1943, Hemadhar Baruah of Bamkukurasora village of Saukhat *mouza* was arrested due his involvement in posting two anti-British prejudicial pamphlets in a tree of Kakojan of Jorhat.¹³ In this case, the accused person Hemadhar Baruah was assisted by two girls of this area.¹⁴

In Titabar region of Jorhat, the process of women mobilization and their participation in the movement had been guided by local Congress leaders, particularly by the women leaders of the region. Being inspired by the contemporary nationalist trend, the women of Titabar region actively participated in the movement and provided the needed assistance to their male counterpart in the course of the movement. Along with local leaders like Kamala Hazarika, Tankeswar Das, Tilerswar Changmai, Padmeswar Siring Phukon and other, women like Jamaki Hazarika, Ahina Hazarika, Syamanta Kumari Hazarika and other women of this region took the responsibilities of mass mobilization. Moreover, under the guidance of Reboti Lahon, women like Budheswari Das, Swamanta Kumari Hazarika, Punyada Das, Aikon Baruah, Dalimi Sonowal and others went village to village in order to create the sense of nationalism.¹⁵

The impact of the movement was not confined to the Jorhat town and its neighboring areas; rather it spread to various interior places like Lahing, Nakachari and other regions of Jorhat. The women of Lahing region took active part in this struggle under the leadership of local Congress workers and women leaders as well. Bimali Gogoi of Selenghat Pithakhua village participated in the movement very actively. In order to mobilize the womenfolk of this region, she took different responsibilities in the course of the movement. Ajolitora Chutia, another young girl from Sukanjan Village of Gakhirkhuwa *mouza*, participated in the movement very actively and for the greater interest of her motherland she left her education. Similarly Bhanumati Borah of Lakhibari Village of Lahing *mouza* participated in the different programmes of the movement by resigning her job at Digboi Oil Company.¹⁶

The women of Nakachari region of Jorhat district had also shouldered critical responsibilities during Quit India Movement. Women of this region like Harumola Gogoi, Moneswari Gogoi, Dalimi Gogoi, Bhodeswari Gogoi and others played the

leading role in the process of mass mobilization. They went village to village in order to disseminating the messages of the movement. However, in doing so the womenfolk of this region were guided by local congress leaders.¹⁷

Although large number of women participated in this movement in typical Gandhian mode but some women of Jorhat took part in underground resistance movement either directly or indirectly. In this context the name of Aikon Bhuyan of Teok is noteworthy. She was involved in the different sabotage activities in Jorhat and its adjoining areas. In order to run such sabotage activities, she organized some secret meetings and instigated the youth Congress volunteers to take part in such activities like demolishing government properties and others.¹⁸ Subsequently, on 21st January, 1943, along with the male underground leader, a group of women took part in the burning of the property of military camp in Daini village of Jorhat.¹⁹

Under the initiative of local revolutionary leaders of Jorhat, a secret underground women revolutionary organization was formed in Jorhat. Reboti Lahon was the President of this organization whereas Kumuda Dulakakhoria was the Secretary. Other active members of this organization were Purbeswari Doloi, Devajani Baruah, Aideu Baruah, Sudhlata Dutta and others. Purbeswari Doloi, along with other members of the organization, went village to village in order to propagate the revolutionary ideas among the women. The tempo of the women participation in underground movement in Jorhat had increased to a great extent when the national women underground leader, Aruna Asaf Ali, stayed at Jorhat for a night and delivered revolutionary lecture at Jorhat.²⁰

From the above analysis, we can come to this conclusion that like in other parts of the country, the women of Assam as well as present Jorhat district participated in different tasks of the Quit India Movement. Although most of them followed the typical non-violent way of protest but some women of Jorhat used to support the underground resistance movement either directly or indirectly. In this mass movement, the women of Jorhat had not only acted as the helpmate to their male counterparts; rather, along with the local Congress leaders, some of them used to guide the masses and took the responsibility of mass mobilization in different places of Jorhat.

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Book Review

Jati-Raajniti, Jaatpaat O Dalit Pratarka: Pashim Banger Prekshapate Tapashili Jatir Abasthan (Caste-Politics, Casteism and Dalit Discourse: Location of the Scheduled Castes in the Context of West Bengal). By Rup Kumar Barman, Alphabet Books, Kolkata, 2019. Price: Rs. 450/-Pages: 211.

From Dalit Study to Dalit Discourse

Jati-Raajniti, Jaatpaat O Dalit Pratarka: Pashim Banger Prekshapate Tapashili Jatir Abasthan (Caste-Politics, Casteism and Dalit Discourse: Location of the Scheduled Castes in the Context of West Bengal) by Rup Kumar Barman (Alphabet Books, Kolkata, 2019. Price: Rs. 450/-Pages: 211) is a significant addition to the Dalit Study especially in Bengali version. There are numerous valuable publications on the history of Indian caste system (though not enough on the Dalits) at national, regional and even at local scale in English. Professor Rup Kumar Barman has certainly made a great contribution to the domain of the Dalit Studies in Bengali.

The present publication has dealt with the various aspects of the history of caste and the Dalits. The author has attempted to locate the origin of the Dalit Studies and Dalit Discourse in the Indian context by reviewing the published official documents as well as the secondary works on the Dalits of India in general and West Bengal in particular. What is much indicative that the author has eagerly followed the oral traditions and media reports for analyzing various aspects of casteism and its functions and dimensions of the changing pattern. He has aptly distinguished between the Dalit Studies and Dalit Discourse.

The author has presented this volume into six chapters excluding an introduction, conclusion and an elaborate bibliographical list. In the introductory chapter, he has rightly focused on prejudice, injustice and casteism. For these historical phenomena, he has placed before us the various accounts like ancient Sanskrit literatures, religious texts written in ancient and early medieval ages, the coming of Islam, the writings of the European administrative scholars, the Morley-Minto reforms, the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, Indian Statutory Commission's

report, reports of the Round-Table Conferences, etc. Apart from these, the author has shown how a section of the Indians has turned into the Depressed Class.

In the first chapter, with an artistic manner the author discussed the historiography of caste, casteism and politics of Bengal including the major writings of the Subaltern School. The main purpose of this chapter is to create a new discourse (*i.e.*, Dalit Discourse) from the broader arena of Subaltern School. After putting forward the discussion, the author has observed that Bengal could not come out from the fold of side-effect of the colonial rule. As a consequence of this approach, the Dalit-entity never got a solid ground in the sociocultural and political history of Bengal. In this chapter, the author has carried forward the discussion on administrative anthropology on the caste-oriented communities in Bengal; writing of the Indian scholars regarding the casteism of colonial period; sociological interpretations on social stratifications, structures, authority and validity; interpretations of the Subaltern School; writings on social mobility and self-respect through sanskritization, political empowerment of the Scheduled Castes in Bengal; new researches on the Scheduled Castes of post-colonial West Bengal, etc.

In the second chapter the author has discussed in details about the origin and growth of a 'lower caste middle class' in Bengal. He has rightly observed that the 'non-Hindu middle class' and 'lower-caste middle class' had started a new trend in the national movement. In the same time, the author observed that in the post-partition Bengal, Dalit-unity and their self-consciousness were vanished. This trend, no doubt, made the Dalits of West Bengal dependent to others or in other words, they became parasitical.

Third chapter focuses upon the caste and left wing politics as well as the caste and right wings politics of West Bengal. What is much significant, author fearlessly pointed out that these populations have been gradually matured as the 'electoral slaves'. Whereas a few scholars and social scientists tried to how that in West Bengal, there is no such existence of caste-politics, rather it deserves for the national as well as class politics. Rup Kumar Barman rightly dares to enter into this debate and elaborately discusses it in this chapter. Dr. Barman blamelessly analyzed the various electoral processes of the Legislative Council and Legislative Assembly during the period 1920-1946 and also the electoral system during the changing political scenario during the period 1947-1951 and obviously so on up-to 2016.

The following chapter reflects the caste-violence in West Bengal in an 'all Indian perspectives'. Rup Kumar meticulously and valiantly presents his experiences and also on the basis of the reports on various issues regarding the caste-violence like National Human Rights Commission; The Asian Human Rights Commission; National Crime Records Bureau, first Backward Classes Commission, International Non-Governmental Organization; Amnesty International, etc. He has propounded

so many issues like intolerance to marital affairs; incidents of honour killing; economic specialization; systematic attack on the Dalit communities; assault and disgrace towards Dalit women; untouchability, etc.

Rup Kumar Barman has brought up the debate on Dalit and Dalit Discourse in his fifth chapter. According to him, 'Dalit' is a kind of symbol of protest against the social injustice. On the other hand, 'Dalit Discourse' is 'an aggregate of Dalit ideologies, actions, assertions and demand for justice, struggle for existence and sharing equal location in the domain of knowledge'. Here he raised a few questions to understand the discourse, which are according to him, the significant characteristics also: Who are the Dalits? Why do the Dalits write? What do they write? When do they write? The author himself confesses that the last question is very much significant. Virtually, through this question, the Dalits get their identity, understand themselves and apprehend their position.

In the sixth chapter, he started with the much disseminated article 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' by famous writer of Subaltern School like Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak. In such a perspective the author introduces the sixth chapter on the writings of subaltern litterateurs of Bengal which, he thinks, is only mode of manifestation of self-realization. Here he discusses the subaltern position in elite discourse; caste-oriented writings and search for justice; creative literatures; autobiography; Dalit literature in post-colonial Bengal. In this chapter, the author observes that the Dalit literatures in various provinces of India have touched the main course of Indian literature in post-Independent period. These literatures, memoirs, autobiographies and personal accounts have enriched the 'Dalit Discourse' enough.

In his concluding chapter, the author has tried to reveal the 'differences of mentality' - which are the principle factors behind the 'social differences'. The author makes responsible to 'dominant minorities' also for such kind of social and contextual differences. In his last observation, author demonstrates with emboldened manner, the strategy to turn the Dalit-voice as the 'slaves of thought'. It is, of course, the Indian tradition of the state system since the very beginning. He also, in some content, makes responsible to the 'reservation policy', which directly or indirectly created a 'sense of deprivation', for such social difference.

The turning point to reconstruct the Dalit history, a new paradigm may be extended through a completely different definition of the 'Dalits'-as a social and political capital. From this perspective, searching out the 'new Dalit entity', incontrovertibly, discloses a new horizon of the Dalit study. This volume may be the pioneering attempt particularly as a Bengali text. What is the condition of the Dalits after Independence? What kinds of changes have been made regarding them? It is the great sensational issue in socio-economic and political space. In this point

of view, finally, Rup Kumar Barman discusses the pattern and status of the subaltern community to Dalit discourse in post-Independence period.

In the end of each chapter, author refers the sources he has used and lastly he presents a bibliography. No doubt, it has enriched this volume.

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Guidelines to the contributors

The Mirror, a peer reviewed annual Journal (having impact factor 4.002), department of history, Cinnamara College, Cinnamara, Jorhat welcomes the contributors from the scholars, academicians, historians and social scientists of various branches of history and allied disciplines, which have interface with history. All the articles must contain a statement about the existing knowledge on the topic concerned so that there is no repetitive research. This should include preferably the following:

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I am delighted to see the latest issue of The Mirror an annual bilingual journal and congratulate the faculty of the Department of History, and the Principal of the Cinnamara College, Jorhat, Assam for undertaking an strenuous enterprise of publishing the journal in collaboration with Assam State Archives, Guwahati, Assam. The journal is listed in the UGC recognised list of journals. The journal will provide a creative platform for scholars of history to get their original research published.

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I congratulate you, on my behalf and also on behalf of the history fraternity for your tremendous efforts in bringing out a research journal (bilingual). There are various aspects of our historical past, which require an in depth scrutiny and a proper analysis of the data laying unstudied at the various repositories, archives, private collections and in the Libraries, which has escaped the attention of the Scholars. This desideratum needs to be filled in at all the levels. The students are to be encouraged to take up the area specific themes, and present the result of this study before the fellow researches.

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